THE X-MEN COMPANION I

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Presents

THE X-MEN COMPANION I

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Giant-Size X-Men #1 was the first appearance of the new X-Men.

Special thanks for helping produce *The X-Men Companion* is due Gary Groth for preparing the illustrations, Kim Thompson and company for their typesetting wizardry, and, of course, Jim Shooter for supplying us with the many black-and-white illustrations that adorn this book. Without their help, this book would have been nearly impossible.

—Peter and Peppy

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THE STRANGEST SUPER-HEROES OF ALL!
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the X-MEN
MARVEL COMICS GROUP 12¢
IN THE SENSATIONAL FANTASTIC FOUR STYLE!
DON'T MISS THIS FABULOUS FIRST ISSUE!
X-MEN VERSUS MAGNETO EARTH'S MOST POWERFUL SUPER VILLAIN!!

FOREWORD

by Peter Sanderson

Welcome to Volume One of *The X-Men Companion*, a work whose purpose is twofold. It is intended to serve as an investigation into the creative processes that lie behind the making of this popular Marvel Comics series. It is also designed to act as an appreciation and celebration of what has become the foremost superhero series of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Apart from the historical and critical essays which serve as introductions to the two volumes, this work takes the form of a series of lengthy, detailed interviews with six of the major creative figures in the history of the series. The emphasis, naturally, is on the "new" *X-Men* series that began in the mid-1970s, but the *X-Men* stories of the 1960s are not neglected by any means. Through these interviews, the writers and artists reveal how characters and storylines originated and developed, what intentions lay behind their work in certain stories, and which artists or writers influenced their own development as comics creators.

Volume One concentrates on the origin of the "new" *X-Men* series, and features interviews with Roy Thomas, Len Wein, and Dave Cockrum, and the beginning of an interview with Chris Claremont. Volume Two will conclude the Claremont interview, offer interviews with John Byrn and Terry Austin, and contain a section previewing various future *X-Men* projects.

As always there are are many people who contributed to a project such as this. Therefore, I extend my thanks to my publisher Gary Groth, who asked me to put these two volumes together; to my interview subjects for graciously giving up so much of their time to participate in this project; to our cover artists for the two volumes, Michael Golden, Gil Kane, and Fred Hembeck; to the Fantagraphics staff members who had to spend so much time transcribing these long interview sessions; to Peppy White for his superb production design for the books; to Jim Shooter and Michael Hobson of Marvel Comics for generously making available so many illustrations for the project; to John Byrne again for giving approval for using some of his X-Men art that Marvel never published; and to Eliot Brown and company for shooting photostats for all of these many illustrations.

Peter Sanderson

IN THE MAIN STUDY OF AN EXCLUSIVE PRIVATE SCHOOL IN NEW YORK'S WESTCHESTER COUNTY, A STRANGE SILENT MAN SITS MOTIONLESS, BROODING ... ALONE WITH HIS INDESCRIBABLE THOUGHTS ...
FINALLY, HIS MEDITATION COMES TO AN END! THEN, WHILE HE REMAINS COMPLETELY MOTIONLESS, A SHARP, COMMANDING THOUGHT RINGS OUT, ECHOING THROUGH THE GREAT HALLS OF THE BUILDING!
ATTENTION, X-MEN! THIS IS PROFESSOR XAVIER CALLING! REPEAT: THIS IS PROFESSOR X CALLING!
YOU ARE ORDERED TO APPEAR AT ONCE! CLASS IS NOW IN SESSION! TARDINESS WILL BE PUNISHED!
NEVER, WITHIN THE MEMORY OF MAN, WAS THERE A "CLASS" SUCH AS THIS! NEVER WAS THERE A "TEACHER" SUCH AS PROFESSOR X! AND NEVER WERE THERE "STUDENTS" SUCH AS THE...
X-MEN
CYCLOPS PRESENT AND ACCOUNTED FOR, SIR!
THE ANGEL REPORTING, SIR!
ICEMAN RIGHT ON SCHEDULE, SIR!
THE BEAST IS HERE, SIR!
Written by: STAN LEE
Drawn by: JACK KIRBY
Inked by: PAUL REINMAN
Lettered by: S. ROSEN
X-401
AND NOW, PREPARE YOURSELF FOR ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING READING EXPERIENCES OF YOUR LIFE! FOR YOU ARE ABOUT TO ENTER THE FASCINATING, UNPREDICTABLE WORLD OF... THE X-MEN!

MUTATIS MUTANDIS

The History of The X-Men

It all began as an unfolding mystery.

The first issue opened with a glimpse of "a strange silent man" sitting alone "in the main study of an exclusive private school in New York's Westchester County." This was not the sort of place where one might expect anything unusual to happen, and certainly not with regard to this man who, one sees clearly in the next panel, appears to be but an ordinary cripple in ordinary clothing. But in that same panel "a sharp commanding *thought* rings out": the man, who calls himself "Professor Xavier"—"Professor X," in fact—orders his unseen "X-Men" to appear at once. "Class is now in session! Tardiness will be punished!"

In burst his students. One looks apelike and swings in through the window. Another flies in on large, feathered wings. Still another, encased in snow, spirals down a pole of ice which had not been present in the previous panel. Behind them trots a dutiful-looking fourth member of the group, wearing an odd visor over his eyes in addition to the blue, yellow, and black costume which two of his colleagues also sport. Amidst this sudden apparent confusion Xavier remains motionless, staring ahead, as if he does not need to see his students in order to know what they are doing. Beast, Angel, Iceman, and Cyclops are the names of the strange arrivals, but what exactly are they? What is this strange school?

On the next page class commences, and the students go through exercises involving such dangerous "obstacles" as a suddenly erupting tower of flame. At one point Angel is stunned and for the first time Xavier actually looks and gestures at his student as he mentally projects both encouragement and real concern. So this Xavier is not as cold and inhuman as he might seem. Then, to relieve the tension, Iceman and Beast engage in play, enabling one to understand much more clearly that these X-Men are not yet adults: Iceman is revealed to be 16, and the others a few years older. Beast and Iceman seem rather likable, but their game gets out of hand, and they are reprimanded by Cyclops. He is obviously very serious, and very much aware of his responsibilities, probably more so than the others; he might be a potential leader for the group. Cyclops now demonstrates his power, which is more striking than any of the others': his visor slowly opens, revealing in closeup two eerie glows where his eyes should be, and then a powerful bolt of energy shoots forth from them.

The lesson finally ends, and then the Professor, hand to his chin and faintly smiling, as if about to test his charges once again, announces the arrival of "a new pupil...a most attractive young lady"; the students are quite interested, to say the least. The newcomer, Jean Grey by name, walks in and asks the Professor the question that has been on the readers' mind all this time: "What kind of school is this...?" It is only then that Xavier first pronounces the word that lies at the conceptual heart of *The X-Men*:

> *You, Miss Grey, like the other four students at this most exclusive school, are a* mutant! *You possess an extra power... one which ordinary humans do not!! That is why I call my students... X-Men, for ex-tra power!*

He then introduces her to the others, who are now in everyday clothing: Hank McCoy, the Beast, now standing upright; Bobby Drake, the Iceman, without his covering of snow (which would later be replaced by a sheath of ice); Warren Worthington III, the Angel, his wings now concealed, as will later be revealed, by a

AND HERE THEY ARE NOW! ALLOW ME TO PRESENT THEM TO YOU! FROM LEFT TO RIGHT WE HAVE HANK McCOY, KNOWN TO US AS THE BEAST! BOBBY DRAKE, NICKNAMED ICEMAN! SLIM SUMMERS, OUR HUMAN CYCLOPS! AND WARREN WORTHINGTON THE THIRD, WHO IS CALLED THE ANGEL!
WELCOME TO TO THE X-MEN, MISS GREY!
BOYS, THIS IS MISS JEAN GREY! SHE WILL BE KNOWN AS MARVEL GIRL!
8

Jean Grey first arrives at Professor X's mansion and meets the other X-Men in their everyday clothes. [*X-Men* #1: Lee-Kirby-Reinman]

tight harness beneath his clothes; and "Slim," later Scott, Summers, alias Cyclops, looking oddly somber with his large dark glasses. They could easily blend into a crowd of normal people, none of whom would suspect there were super-powered mutants in their midst.

Jean Grey looks entirely normal herself, but now, relieved at not having to conceal her mutant ability within such company, she pulls over a chair for herself telekinetically. She appears quite self-assured as she speaks to Xavier; it is obvious she will not take second place to the men in the group.

Xavier goes on to explain to Jean that he himself is a mutant as well.

> *But when I was young, normal people feared me, distrusted me! I realized the human race is not yet ready to accept those with extra powers! So I decided to build a haven...a school for* X-Men!
>
> *Here we stay, unsuspected by normal humans, as we learn to use our powers for the benefit of mankind...to help those who would distrust us if they knew of our existence.*
>
> *...There are many mutants walking the Earth...and more are born each year!*
>
> *Not all of them want to help mankind!... Some hate the human race, and wish to destroy it! Some feel that the mutants should be the real rulers of Earth! It is our job to protect mankind from those...from the evil mutants!*

With that, Xavier's now benevolent face gives way over the space of a panel to the sinister, helmeted visage of the evil mutant who is to become the X-Men's greatest adversary, Magneto. "The human race no longer deserves dominion over the planet Earth!" he thunders. "The day of the *mutants* is upon us!"

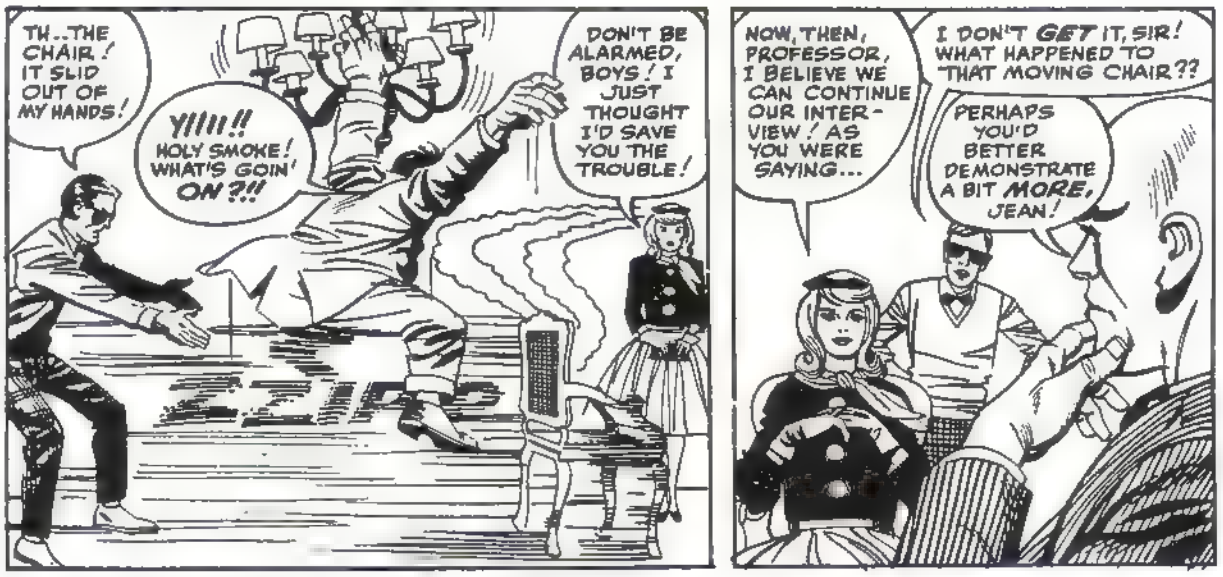
Thus, in this masterful opening sequence in its very first issue, the creative team of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby stated all of the major themes that have run through the history of *The X-Men*. In that same issue Jean Grey takes on the costumed identity of Marvel Girl and the five "students" undergo what Xavier terms their "baptism of fire" by driving Magneto and the Cape Citadel military base.

The concept of super-powered mutants had long been familiar to readers of science fiction, but it had not been the basis of a comics series until Lee and Kirby created *The X-Men*. Still, *The X-Men* has various forebears in the world of comics. For example, Xavier the father figure and his young students make up a surrogate family, much as Lee and Kirby's previous creation, the Fantastic Four, do. Moreover, Xavier and Magneto are a pair much like *The Fantastic Four*'s Reed Richards and Doctor Doom: two eternal archfoes, equal but opposite, alike in certain ways, one a basically ordinary but idealistic man apart from his great intelligence and super-power, the other an imperious, dangerous would-be dictator who tries to distance himself from the rest of humanity by wearing an eerie but somehow regal costume and hiding his face behind an inhuman mask.

The X-Men's powers and unusual physical appearance inspired in the general public the same fear and suspicion faced by their predecessors at Marvel, Spider-Man and the Hulk. Simultaneously DC was putting out the initial installments of *The Doom Patrol*, which concerned a group of super-powered "freaks" under the leadership of a crippled genius and which often battled a "Brotherhood of Evil." Aside from this there is no resemblance between *The X-Men* and *The Doom Patrol*, and the question of whether either series had any influence on the other remains a matter of speculation.

However, Lee has stated several times that *The Fantastic Four* was created to compete with DC's superhero team book, *Justice League of America*. Inasmuch as it began with a group of heroes each of whom had his own series, Marvel's *Avengers* seems to be a clear attempt to do its own version of the *League*. Presumably *The X-Men* was at least in part yet another attempt to appeal to the readership that liked super-hero teams.

The X-Men was also a "kid group," and Kirby had had a great deal of experience with such groups in


TH..THE CHAIR! IT SLID OUT OF MY HANDS!
YIIII!! HOLY SMOKE! WHAT'S GOIN' ON?!!
DON'T BE ALARMED, BOYS! I JUST THOUGHT I'D SAVE YOU THE TROUBLE!
NOW, THEN, PROFESSOR, I BELIEVE WE CAN CONTINUE OUR INTER-VIEW! AS YOU WERE SAYING...
I DON'T GET IT, SIR! WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT MOVING CHAIR??
PERHAPS YOU'D BETTER DEMONSTRATE A BIT MORE, JEAN!

Jean shows what she can do. [*X-Men* #1: Lee-Kirby-Reinman]

series like *Boy Commandos* and *Newsboy Legion*. Superman's younger self, Superboy, had starred in stories since the '40s, Captain Marvel Jr. and Mary Marvel had provided "junior" versions of Captain Marvel, and there had always been "kid sidekicks" around, most notably Robin and Bucky, the partner of Kirby's Captain America. In the 1960s Marvel began handling the concept of the "kid" super-hero quite differently. Marvel gave readers the X-Men and Spider-Man, not the X-Kids and Spider-Boy. These characters were all adolescents, and the X-Men had a mentor in Professor Charles Xavier, but they were portrayed as people who through their skill, intelligence, and determination proved themselves the equals of their elders. "Despite their seeming youth and inexperience," reflects Magneto concerning the X-Men in their initial issue, "they are mighty antagonists! I must never again make the mistake of underestimating them." DC's Legion of Super-Heroes was made up of teenagers acting independently of direct adult supervision, but they were still marked as children by their names, e.g., Cosmic Boy, Saturn Girl, and Lightning Lad. So was the X-Men's Marvel Girl for that matter, but at that time even women obviously past adolescence were being labeled "girls" in the comics, such as the Fantastic Four's Invisible Girl. It should be noted that Marvel Girl was treated as an equal member of her team to a much greater degree than the Invisible Girl was in her team's book.

The X-Men might also have a root in the pulps. The Beast is reminiscent of Doc Savage's aide Monk in his apelike physique, and of his other aide Johnny (as well as Newsboy Legionnaire Big Words) in his vocabulary. (The Doc Savage connection may be even stronger in *The Fantastic Four*, with its genius leader, its headquarters in a New York skyscraper, and the similarity between the friendly feud between the Thing and the Human Torch and the mock quarrels between Savage aides Monk and Ham.)

Elements of *The X-Men* are visible elsewhere in Lee's work. The idea of the feared, alienated hero manifests itself throughout *Spider-Man*, *The Silver Surfer*, and *The Incredible Hulk*. The situation in which Scott and Jean were for so long afraid to acknowledge their love for each other is characteristic of Lee's work in the 1960s.

Most importantly, perhaps, *The X-Men* is the first example of a pattern that has proven quite important in Kirby's *œuvre*. In essence, *The X-Men* concerns a race of super-powered beings living hidden amid the world of normal humanity. This super-race has both its good members and its evil ones, with a father figure presiding over each side, and the battles between these super-beings will decide the fate of all of humanity. In *The X-Men* the super-race was that of mutants, unscientifically termed *Homo superior* (although in fact each different kind of mutant would comprise a separate supspecies of *Homo sapiens*). The good mutants, the X-Men led by Charles Xavier, fought to prevent the evil ones, most notably Magneto and his Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, from taking over the world. Later, Lee and Kirby cast the theme in a new mold in *The Fantastic Four* and created the Inhumans, another super-race divided into good and evil beings The most notorious evil Inhuman, Maximus, hardly qualifies as much of a leader, much less as a father figure, but the noble Black Bolt fills both roles. Eventually Kirby left Marvel to create his "New Gods" mythos at DC, which was chronicled in four series: *The New Gods* itself, *The Forever People*, *Mister Miracle*,

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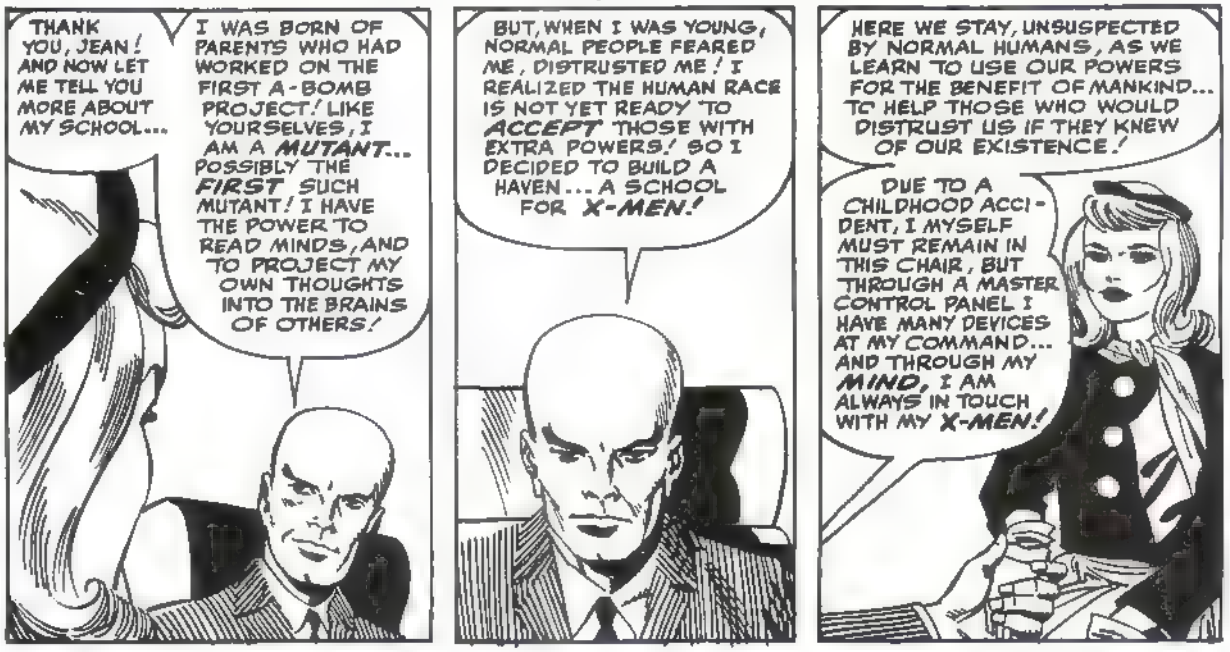
©1980 MARVEL COMICS GROUP
ANOTHER GREAT LEE-KIRBY SUPER-SPECTACULAR:
"BEWARE OF THE BLOB!"
THE X-MEN BATTLE The BLOB, ONE OF THE STRANGEST SUPER-FOES OF ALL!
X-MEN! THE TEEN-AGE SUPER-HEROES WHO HAVE TAKEN AMERICA BY STORM!


THANK YOU, JEAN! AND NOW LET ME TELL YOU MORE ABOUT MY SCHOOL...
I WAS BORN OF PARENTS WHO HAD WORKED ON THE FIRST A-BOMB PROJECT! LIKE YOURSELVES, I AM A MUTANT... POSSIBLY THE FIRST SUCH MUTANT! I HAVE THE POWER TO READ MINDS, AND TO PROJECT MY OWN THOUGHTS INTO THE BRAINS OF OTHERS!
BUT, WHEN I WAS YOUNG, NORMAL PEOPLE FEARED ME, DISTRUSTED ME! I REALIZED THE HUMAN RACE IS NOT YET READY TO ACCEPT THOSE WITH EXTRA POWERS! SO I DECIDED TO BUILD A HAVEN... A SCHOOL FOR X-MEN!
HERE WE STAY, UNSUSPECTED BY NORMAL HUMANS, AS WE LEARN TO USE OUR POWERS FOR THE BENEFIT OF MANKIND... TO HELP THOSE WHO WOULD DISTRUST US IF THEY KNEW OF OUR EXISTENCE!
DUE TO A CHILDHOOD ACCIDENT, I MYSELF MUST REMAIN IN THIS CHAIR, BUT THROUGH A MASTER CONTROL PANEL I HAVE MANY DEVICES AT MY COMMAND... AND THROUGH MY MIND, I AM ALWAYS IN TOUCH WITH MY X-MEN!

From *X-Men* #1: Lee-Kirby-Reinman.

and oddly enough, *Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen*. Now the super-race came from two planets: New Genesis, home of the good "gods" ruled by the Highfather Izaya, and Apokolips, home of the satanic Darkseid and his minions The concept of a group of super-powered teen-agers returned in the New Gods mythos in the form of the Forever People who, like the original X-Men, consisted of four males and a female. None of the Forever People had an unusual physical appearance as most of the X-Men did, and they were not persecuted by society as Marvel's mutants were. The Forever People also differed from the X-Men in seeming more like children than like young adults; indeed, they embodied an adult's idealized and rather naive view of what the "flower children" of the 1960s were like. Still later, back at Marvel, Kirby transformed the basic concept yet again in *The Eternals*, presenting the conflict between the superhuman Eternals and the Deviants, with the inscrutable, truly godlike Celestials watching over all. The Stranger, who was introduced in *X-Men* #11, in which he puts a temporary end to the struggle between Magneto and the X-Men, may well be a forebear of Kirby's celestials as well as of other godlike Marvel characters such as Galactus.

Lee only continued to write *The X-Men* through #19; Kirby stayed through issue 17, doing breakdowns rather than full pencils toward the end. Within this relative handful of issues, though, they did a great deal to expand upon the wonderfully strong premise of their first issue. One of their objectives seems to have been to introduce the readers to a great number of mutants, each with an amazing power of his own, and to depict their varying attitudes toward their identity of *Homo superior*.

First after Magneto came the Vanisher in #2, who was quite a different character then than what he has become since. This issue concisely records the Vanisher's astonishingly swift rise to nationwide power. He begins as an unknown person in a weird costume (not at all one of Kirby's best designs, although inexplicably memorable nonetheless) who calmly walks into a bank and equally calmly announces his intention to rob it. He is merely an object of laughter since no one present thinks that this lone weirdo could possibly get away with the money until suddenly and unexpectedly he *does* by vanishing into the proverbial thin air. The Vanisher has the mutant power to teleport himself; he is aware that he is not an ordinary human and he glories in the fact. Utterly self-confident, he regards human beings merely as pawns to serve him or as fools to be toyed with and easily outwitted. The Vanisher materializes before witnesses to announce that he plans to steal the United States' continental defense plans, and then teleports away. The government surrounds the briefcase containing the plans with armed guards, the Vanisher simply materializes in their midst, coolly purloins the briefcase, and vanishes. The Vanisher becomes the king of the American underworld and holds the plans for ten million dollars ransom. His final confrontation with the X-Men in the story takes the form of a tableau which startlingly symbolizes the possible overthrow of all order in the United States: the Vanisher had led a virtual army of underworld figures onto the lawn of the White House itself to demand the

MEN CALL ME-- MAGNETO!
NEXT ISSUE:
THE MOST IMAGINATIVE, UNEXPECTED THRILLER OF THE SEASON-- CHOCK-FULL OF WONDERS YOU'VE BEEN MOANING TO SEE-- AND OTHERS YOU NEVER THOUGHT POSSIBLE! WE PERSONALLY GIVE X-MEN #18 OUR HIGHEST RECOMMENDATION-- AND YOU KNOW HOW HARD TO PLEASE WE ARE! SO BE SURE TO JOIN US NEXT ISH-- WHAT GOOD IS A CLASSIC IF YOU CAN'T SHARE IT WITH SOMEONE YOU LIKE?

A powerful portrait of the X-Men's greatest nemesis by Jack Kirby (layouts), Werner Roth (pencils), and Dick Ayers (inks). [*X-Men* #17]

ransom money.

Next came the Blob, whose enormously massive body gave him both superhuman strength and virtual invulnerability. What kind of place in the world would such an unusual being find for himself? He would join a circus, of course, which is where the X-Men, looking for new members, find him. Power has gone to the Blob's head, making him too bullheaded to obey Xavier and too self-centered to have any interest in becoming part of the team. Realizing that he poses a threat to the X-Men since he knows who they are, he decides to strike at them first. Whereas the Vanisher was a master of cunning, the Blob embodies sheer animalistic brute force. Unfortunately, whereas the Vanisher led professional criminals against the X-Men, the Blob makes do with his fellow circus performers. At least the X-Men were not having to do battle with the Ringmaster and his laughable Circus of Crime, but such opponents made the X-Men look like a second-rate team. The Avengers did not have to fight circus performers. Good as the early *X-Men* series is, it seems obvious that it was not being treated as the equal of Marvel's other team book, *The Fantastic Four* and *The Avengers*.

The third *X-Men* issue is also notable for its development of some of the heroes' personalities. The Beast begins using his once characteristic polysyllabic vocabulary and first displays his intellectual interests. Cyclops is shown worrying about the dangers his uncontrollable eye beams pose. From the first issue his attraction to Jean was obvious, and potentially more serious than the others'. In issue 3 it is clear that his feelings for her will be a major subplot in the series, and we learn that he is afraid to get involved with her because he fears his eye beams will endanger her in particular. Oddly, we also learn from one of Xavier's thought balloons that he too bears an unspoken love for Jean. Let us interpret this statement as merely an indication of paternal devotion, although Lee did not intend it that way. In any event, this aborted subplot was quickly and thankfully forgotten by the very next issue.

The first issue drew a contrast between Xavier and Magneto both pictorially and through the dialogue. Issue 4 opens with an equally vivid and visual contrast between Xavier's X-Men and Magneto's own team, the original Brotherhood of Evil Mutants. The X-Men have gathered around a table on which a birthday cake is set, and are in a playful, happy mood. The scene then shifts to the members of the Brotherhood at dinner:

Stan Lee and Jack Kirby bump into Scott Summers and Jean Grey. [*X-Men* #98: Claremont-Cockrum-Grainger]

DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME, YOU BIG LUG-- I SAID...
...KISS ME!
JEAN, I... I... MMMMMM.
HEY, STAN, YOU KNOW WHO THEY WERE? I TELL YA, THEY NEVER USED TO DO THAT WHEN WE HAD THE BOOK.
AH, JACK, YOU KNOW THESE YOUNG KIDS-- THEY GOT NO RESPECT.

their unfriendliness breaks into a quarrel and finally hurtles toward violence. The distinction between the values fostered by Xavier and those fostered by Magneto is obvious.

The Brotherhood consists of the dwarfish, high-jumping Toad, subservient to his "master" Magneto but with a streak of rebelliousness that will eventually lead to his revolt against him in a Roy Thomas *Avengers* story years later; Mastermind, a caster of illusions, who here unsuccessfully tries to play the seducer with his female partner, a role he shall bring off with Jean Grey over a hundred issues later; Wanda, the Scarlet Witch, creator of "hexes" with unpredictable effects, a moral young woman who is decidedly uncomfortable in such nefarious company; and Pietro, the super-fast Quicksilver, whose only emotional outlets appear to be the exercise of his hair-trigger temper against real and imagined enemies, and an obsessive devotion to his sister's welfare. His temper should come as no surprise: years later it will be revealed to those willing to read between the lines that Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch are the children of Magneto, although not one of the three is to this day aware of their relationship.

Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch do not belong in a life of crime; instead, in #11 they quit Magneto's Brotherhood and shortly thereafter gain admission to the Avengers. They remained with Magneto only because they believed that they owed him a debt and that their safety depended on aiding him in his war with humanity. Here the theme of the persecution of mutants first raises its head in a dramatic way. Xavier had spoken of humanity's fear of mutants in the first issue, but at the end the military congratulates the X-Men for foiling Magneto's plans; the X-Men are treated as heroes in #2 as well, and it is revealed that they work hand in hand with the F.B.I. (another element of the series which has rightfully been dropped). In #4, however, a flashback shows that Magneto won Wanda and Pietro's loyalty by rescuing her from an angry mob that accused her of being a real witch. The result of ordinary humans' prejudice against people with superhuman powers has been put on view for us.

In this story Magneto and Xavier meet, apparently for the first time, on the astral plane, and their enmity begins. Magneto finds it hard to understand why Xavier disagrees with his goals.

MAGNETO: Only you and your X-Men stand between the mutants and world conquest! Why?? *Why do you fight us?? For you too are a mutant!!*

XAVIER: But I seek to save mankind, not destroy it!...

We must use our powers to bring about a golden age on Earth—side by side with ordinary humans!

HAVEN'T YOU GUESSED YET?? AS A TRUE MUTANT...AS A MEMBER OF HOMO SUPERIOR, I HAVE THE ABILITY TO TELEPORT MYSELF TO ANY PLACE I CAN THINK OF...AT UNIMAGINABLE SPEED!
SO THAT'S HOW YOU VANISH...BY MENTALLY TRAVELING TO ANOTHER PLACE!
PREPOSTEROUS! PURE SCIENCE FICTION BALDERDASH! I DON'T BELIEVE A WORD OF IT!

The Vanisher reveals he is a mutant. [*X-Men* #2: Lee-Kirby-Reinman]

MAGNETO: Never! The humans must be our slaves! They are not worthy *to share dominion of the Earth with us!*

Since the X-Men will not join Magneto's drive for power, in his eyes they can only be what Quicksilver calls them in this issue: "*You* are the betrayers of *Homo superior*!"

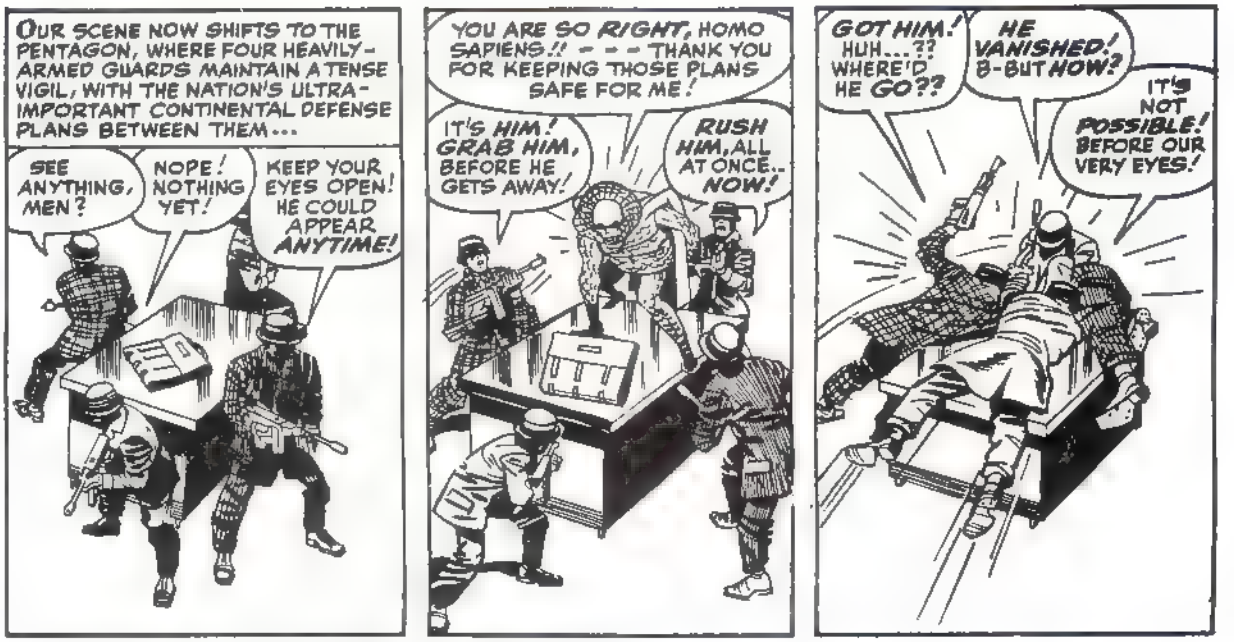
Magneto's description of humans as not being "worthy" to govern Earth is intriguing. Later in this issue Quicksilver objects Magneto's plan to destroy a small South American country with a nuclear bomb.

QUICKSILVER: But what about all the innocent people that will be killed?

MAGNETO: Have I not told *you—they are merely* Homo sapiens—*they would kill* us *if they could! We are only fighting in self-defense!*

Most readers probably believed that Magneto was consciously telling lies when he used such arguments. Not until *X-Men* #150 did we learn that Magneto himself was a victim of persecution: his entire family, as far as he knows, has been wiped out, and as a child he himself was imprisoned in Auschwitz. As a result he apparently sincerely believes that humanity is out to destroy anyone who is so different from the majority as a mutant is. His murderous fanaticism is understandable though unforgivable.

X-Men #4 finds the heroes battling the Brotherhood in South America, and in the next issue their flight moves from New York's Grand Central Station to Magneto's "Asteroid M" in outer space. In later years the X-Men's journeys over the globe and into space will become more frequent; in their first years they usually


OUR SCENE NOW SHIFTS TO THE PENTAGON, WHERE FOUR HEAVILY-ARMED GUARDS MAINTAIN A TENSE VIGIL, WITH THE NATION'S ULTRA-IMPORTANT CONTINENTAL DEFENSE PLANS BETWEEN THEM...
SEE ANYTHING, MEN?
NOPE! NOTHING YET!
KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN! HE COULD APPEAR ANYTIME!
YOU ARE SO RIGHT, HOMO SAPIENS!! - - - THANK YOU FOR KEEPING THOSE PLANS SAFE FOR ME!
IT'S HIM! GRAB HIM, BEFORE HE GETS AWAY!
RUSH HIM, ALL AT ONCE.. NOW!
GOT HIM! HUH...?? WHERE'D HE GO??
HE VANISHED! B-BUT HOW?
IT'S NOT POSSIBLE! BEFORE OUR VERY EYES!

The Vanisher puts on a show. [*X-Men* #2: Lee-Kirby-Reinman]

confined themselves to the New York area Even when they did travel far afield Kirby's art at that period, and later Werner Roth's, did not have the epic sweep that could make unusual environments come alive for the reader the way Neal Adams and John Byrne later did. (*X-Men* #9 is a decided exception to this rule, as shall be seen.)

Issue 5 dramatizes the theme of prejudice even more strongly. This time the mob appears not in flashback, but right before the X-Men's eyes, first on television and then in person, as it pursues the disguised Toad after he uses his powers in an athletic event. "And look at the crowd!" exclaims one X-Man. "They're livid with rage! Just like Professor X always warned us...normal humans fear and distrust anyone with super-mutant powers." Another X-Man points out, "They're calling him *'fake'!* They feel it must be a *trick* of some sort...they *want* to believe that...it makes them feel less inferior!" Here one of the reasons for the opposition to mutants is exposed, which will later be reflected in #141 in Senator Kelly's concern whether in a world of super-powerful beings there remains any place for ordinary humans.

From the mutants' point of view, that question should be reversed: do mutants have any place in a world almost entirely made up of normal humans? Jean tells Xavier in #7 that "without *you*, we'd have remained misfits, in a world that could never understand us." In some of Roy Thomas's stories the X-Men indicate that they would gladly give up their powers and become part of the vast majority of ordinary humans. Chris Claremont's X-Men, on the other hand, even including Scott on occasion, take great pleasure in using their powers. Perhaps Xavier's description of the X-Men's powers in #7 as "talent" is relevant here. These super-powers are thus compared to creative, intellectual, and athletic abilities that any "normal human" can possess but that not everyone does. Xavier's position is that such super-powers should be developed and used for the common good, and not to gain dominance over those people who lack them. The point with regard to "normal" human talents is clear.

The X-Men and the Brotherhood are each constantly searching for new recruits in their war with each other. In #6 they are both after the Sub-Mariner, whom they mistakenly suspect of being a mutant, but he is disgusted by their battling and leaves. The Brotherhood then succeeds where the X-Men had failed and enlists the Blob in #7, but after being betrayed by the opportunistic Magneto, the Blob wearies of the war among the mutants, and pathetically returns to the carny, vowing, "I'll never trust anyone again."

Meanwhile Xavier informed his charges after their battle in space with the Brotherhood in #5 that they had just taken their "final exam." He continued, "And I'm proud to say that you've all *passed* with flying colors! You've proven you can think and act for yourselves!! Your training period is over!! *Congratulations, my X-Men!!*" Xavier's pronouncement confirmed what had become obvious: the X-Men's supposed "graduation" did not mark the turning point in their lives that all of the double exclamation points in that quotation would indicate. They continued to stay at Xavier's school and continued to take instruction in the Danger Room. The original X-Men cannot truly be said to have

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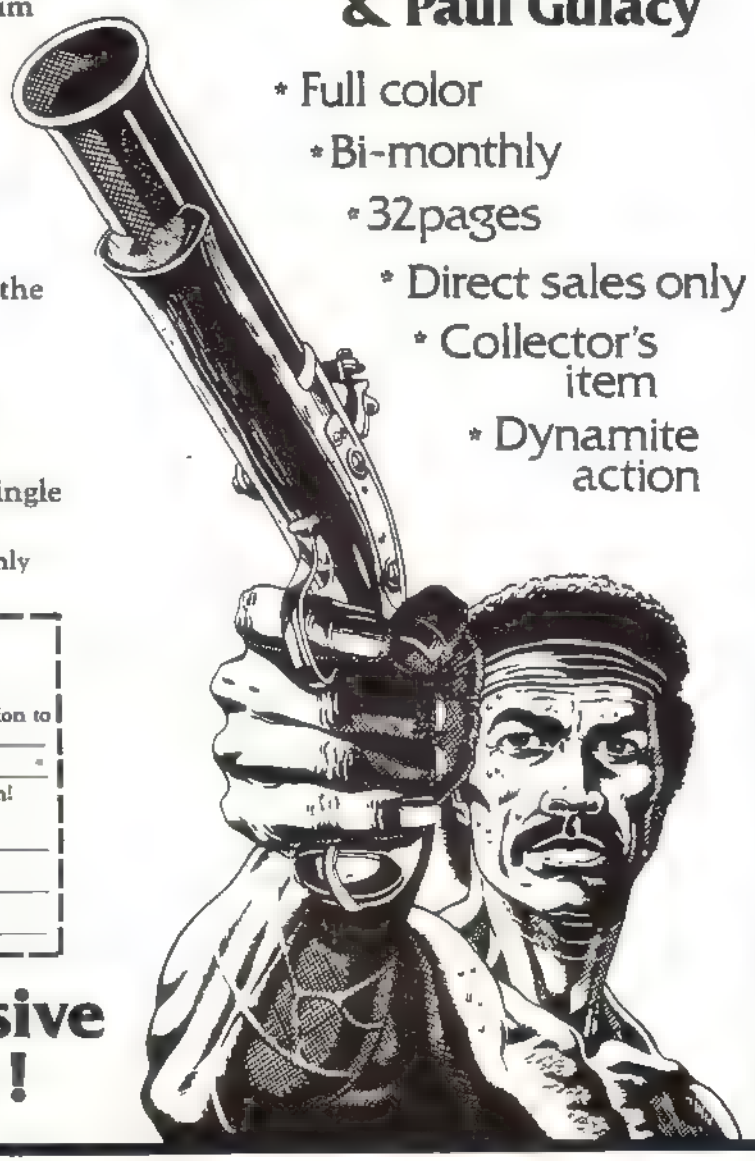

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The X-Men again encounter four of their earliest foes: the Vanisher (top left screen), Unus (top right), the Blob (bottom left), and Mastermind (bottom right). [*X-Men* #37: Thomas-Andru-Heck]

graduated until Xavier's feigned death later set them wholly on their own. There has been a slow and steady movement away from the "school" concept in *The X-Men* over its history, though. It is noteworthy that it was Xavier himself who really defeated the Vanisher and the Blob in #2 and 3. Issue 5 was the first to really find the "students" acting entirely on their own, as they did again when Xavier left a few issues later to track down Lucifer, the extraterrestrial spy preparing for a takeoever of Earth, who had crippled Xavier in an encounter years before. Xavier appointed Scott as "group leader" in #7, to guide the others in his absence. Scott protested that he could not possibly take on such responsibility, but he was being too modest: as Cyclops he has filled the role well ever since, and soon was directing the X-Men in battle even when Xavier was physically or telepathically present. As time passed, the X-Men went on missions with Xavier's assistance, but without his guiding their every move by any means. During his periods as the series writer, Roy Thomas twice set the X-Men completely free of Xavier's supervision, first during the long period when the Professor was held prisoner by the sinister organization Factor Three, and soon afterwards when, as noted, he pretended to be dead while preparing to battle the invasion by the alien Z'nox. By the time the new X-Men came along, who were for the most part older and more practiced in their skills than the originals, the school aspect of *The X-Men* was virtually dead, apart from the obligatory Danger Room scenes. The group had become more like the Avengers, but with an important difference. Xavier's mansion was still the "haven" for mutants that he called it in the first issue, where the X-Men lived happily together as a commune of close friends and indeed as a surrogate family, away from an unfriendly outside world that misunderstood them.

Issue 8 provided a startling surprise, demonstrating how deeply the X-Men could suffer from justified feelings of persecution. After becoming the target of a mutant-hating mob, the Beast himself declares that Magneto is correct that the human race is the enemy of all mutants. He resigns from the X-Men and, like the Blob, and for that matter, the early Spider-Man, decides to exploit his powers in show business. Hank becomes a wrestler going under the name of the Beast, and ends up in a ring with another mutant, Unus "the Untouchable," who can surround himself with an impenetrable force field. Not unexpectedly, the Brotherhood was testing Unus as a possible new

The original Brotherhood of Evil Mutants. Left to right: The Toad, Mastermind, Magneto, Quicksilver, the Scarlet Witch. [*X-Men* #11: Lee-Kirby-Stone]

member, but the X-Men, including a returned Beast, defeated him. Interestingly, up until the very end of the story the other X-Men feared that the Beast had gone over to the other side of the Brotherhood. That Hank would have joined with Magneto, a man he knew to be a would-be mass murderer, is highly unlikely, but the ability of the X-Men to doubt Hank's loyalty nonetheless acts as a measure of the strength of the temptation Magneto offers to individuals who feel themselves to be as alienated from society as the mutants

Issue 10 took the X-Men—and Marvel's readers—for the very first time to the Savage Land, a tropical region lying amid the Antarctic wastes (although in early accounts it was underground) in which prehistorical animals and peoples still survived. This issue is the most interesting of the early issues artistically, since it allows Kirby to show off in his depiction of dinosaurs and other extinct fauna. If the Savage Land was reminiscent of Edgar Rice Burroughs's Pellucidar, then its self-styled master was reminiscent of his hero Tarzan It was this issue that introduced Ka-Zar to Marvel Comics in the first of his three phases of characterization. Here Ka-Zar was very much like the Tarzan of the movies· very animalistic, with a vocabulary that could kindly be termed limited. This was not surprising, since Ka-Zar was the son of a deceased English lord and had been abandoned as an infant in the Savage Land. Later, in *Daredevil*, Ka-Zar returned to England, where he must have received a very rapid education, for when he next appeared, in *Hulk*, *Spider-Man*, and eventually once again in *X-Men*, he had become like

EXACTLY! I HAVE DECIDED THAT YOU, THE X-MAN KNOWN AS CYCLOPS, SHALL BE GROUP LEADER UNTIL I RETURN!
ME?? BUT, SIR-- THE BEAST IS A BETTER SCHOLAR--WHILE ANGEL IS MORE AGGRESSIVE, AND--!
BUT IT IS YOU WHO POSSESSES THE RARE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP!
MY DECISION STANDS!

Professor X appoints Cyclops as the X-Men's leader. [*X-Men* #7: Lee-Kirby-Stone]

the Tarzan of Burroughs's books; both savage and nobleman, embracing the jungle's way of life, but acting and speaking with an air of grandeur. Ka-Zar finally got his own short-lived series, and has one again today, in which his personality has changed again, so that he now seems more like a man who had always lived in civilization and then gave it all up to master the jungle, rather than a man who rose from savage to civilized aristocrat.

Ka-Zar is one of the numerous "spin-off" characters

The X-Men s first uproar ous encounter with Ka-Zar and Zabu. [*X-Men* #10: Lee-Kirby-Stone]

DAZZLER!
THE ROOM GOES BLACK AND DEATHLY STILL THEN, THE HOUSE BAND STARTS A POUNDING, RHYTHMIC INTRO
- AND SHE IS THERE!
A VISION IN SKINTIGHT SILVER, SILHOUETTED IN AN AWESOME LIGHTSHOW THAT SHIFTS IN COLOR, INTENSITY AND POSITION TO MATCH HER EMOTIONS AS SHE SINGS

Enter the Dazzler [*X-Men* #130: Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

like *The X-Men* has spawned. Quicksilver, the Scarlet Witch, and the Beast have all served as members of the Avengers, and the Angel and Iceman were founding members of the original Champions. Although the Dazzler was not created by Chris Claremont and John Byrne, it was decided that she would make her Marvel debut in one of their *X-Men* stories. Byrne's team of Canadian super-heroes, Alpha Flight, whom he introduced in *The X-Men*, may eventually receive their own Marvel mini-series, as Wolverine definitely will. Phoenix, Iceman, and Nightcrawler starred in solo stories in *Bizarre Adventures*. Today, an entirely new *X-Men* series is about to spin off from the regular one.

The X-Men proved their worth as super-heroes in #9 by holding off a team of Avengers including Thor, Iron Man, Captain America, Giant-Man, and the Wasp in the course of an adventure involving Lucifer. They were ready to take on greater foes than the now predictable lesser members of the Brotherhood. Magneto, alas, seemed to depend too much on his flunkies and hardly appeared to be as formidable as a Doctor Doom. Still, Lee and Kirby apparently felt that although the Brotherhood had run its course, the X Men were still not powerful enough to defeat them completely, and so in #11 they brought in a *deus ex machina*. Magneto finally fell victim to the grand old sin of *hubris* when he attempted to force the mysterious Stranger to obey him and learned that the Stranger was a being of far more power than he could ever hope to control. The Stranger turned Mastermind to stone and carried Magneto and the Toad off to his distant planet. Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch left the Brotherhood, having finally (and it was about time) become fed up with Magneto's amorality. With the breakup of the Brotherhood, a phase of the history of the X-Men had ended in more ways than one: after this issue, Kirby did only layouts, not full pencils.

Although the first 11 issues had been interesting conceptually, in terms of generating drama and excitement they did not come anywhere close to the heights Lee and Kirby repeatedly demonstrated they could attain in the 1960s. With #12 matters changed considerably. The entire story of that issue consists of a powerfully suspenseful buildup to the appearance, in the final panel, of a foe who seemed far more powerful than the Magneto of the early issues, somehow inhuman, and utterly invincible. This was the Juggernaut, who was once merely Xavier's stepbrother with the blatantly allegorical name of Cain Marko. With Xavier and Marko Lee and Kirby were again working with the theme of sibling rivalry that manifested itself elsewhere with Thor and Loki and Black Bolt and Maximus The issue continually cut between flashbacks to the earlier lives of Xavier and Marko, showing how the latter

Magneto finally meets a more powerful adversary, the Stranger from another planet. [*X-Men* #11: Lee-Kirby-Stone]

I TOLD YOU-- I AM A STRANGER!
BUT, I AM A STRANGER DIFFERENT FROM ANY YOU HAVE EVER KNOWN! FAR, FAR DIFFERENT!
TOAD!! COME BACK! I AM STILL MASTER HERE! I AM STILL-- MAGNETO!

gained his tremendous power, scenes of the X-Men in the present, growing increasingly tense within the barricaded mansion, and shots of the Juggernaut, cloaked in shadows, outside, breaching one "impassable" barrier after another. Perhaps the Juggernaut's visual appearance did not fulfill the expectations aroused by this tremendous buildup (later artists would make him look even larger and heavier), nor did the battle that followed in #13. Still, #13 worked quite well, especially considering that it consisted solely of one long continuous battle, which ended only when the X-Men managed to unmask the monster, revealing him to still bear the human visage of Marko, who for all the Juggernaut's irresistible brute force, still fell ignominiously before the power of Xavier's mind, as the Vanisher had before him

A wholly different kind of menace than any the series had yet presented made its first appearance in the next three issues, which constituted Lee and Kirby's parable on the dangers of fanaticism. Xavier went on television to debate the issue of the alleged "mutant menace" with Dr. Bolivar Trask, who feared the coming of a future in which humanity would be enslaved by a master race of inhuman mutants. To prevent this menace from ever arising, Trask had secretly created a series of gigantic warrior-robots, to which he gave a name suggestive of ultra-right wing vigilantism: the Sentinels. In the tradition of Frankenstein and his monster, the Sentinels turned against their creator, and became far greater menaces than the ones they had been built to combat. At last realizing the truth and his own blindness and guilt, Trask died in the act of destroying the Sentinels and the even more monstrously enormous robot that was their leader, the Master Mold. In their absolutely unquestioning, amoral dedication to their goal, the Sentinels remain Marvel Comics' most powerful symbol of the evils of the mentality of the persecutor. Over a hundred issues later *The X-Men* would take the concept even further by giving a twist to Trask's nightmare and presenting a future America dictatorially ruled by the Sentinels, who confined all the mutants they did not slaughter within concentration camps. The Sentinels could remind one of Nazism as well as of McCarthyism, or of any other movement that victimized people for being different from the majority

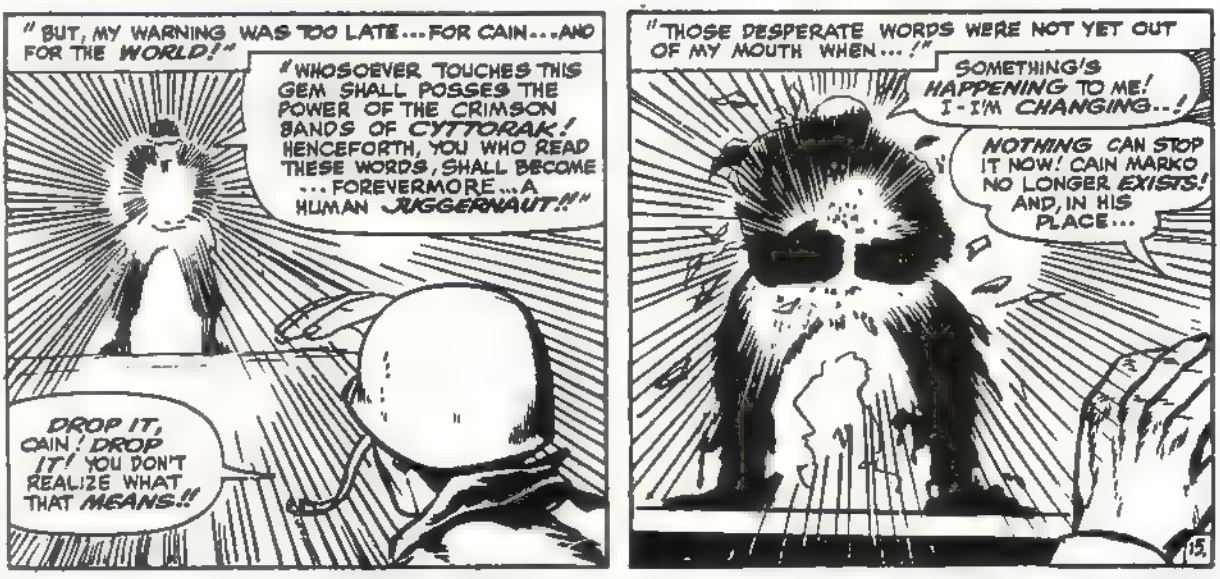
Alex Toth did the pencils over Jack Kirby's layouts in *X-Men* #12, as with this particularly spooky-looking Professor Xavier. [Lee-Kirby-Toth-Colletta]

The last Lee-Kirby issue, #17, again took the form of a long, suspenseful build up to the first clear appearance of the master villain on the final page. But whereas the Juggernaut had been trying to break into the mansion where the X Men waited, this time the X-Men were moving warily into and around the inside of the mansion, which had been taken over by Magneto. This issue and the next did a great deal to create Magneto's reputation as a truly formidable and powerful adversary. When he was heading then Brotherhood, Magneto seemed dependent on his allies' assistance. This time, however, Magneto was operating alone, and again it was necessary to call in the Stranger to defeat him. It is this depication of Magneto as nearly invincible even when acting alone that would return to *The X-Men* in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Lee continued writing the book for one more issue, #19, in which he introduced Calvin Rankin, the Mimic,

The future Juggernaut and Professor X as young stepbrothers. [*X-Men* #12: Lee-Kirby (layouts)-Toth (finished pencils)-Colletta]

IF YOU'RE WONDERIN' WHAT I'M DOIN' HERE, I JUST GOT *EXPELLED* FROM SCHOOL! I DECIDED THERE WASN'T ANYTHING ELSE THOSE CREEPS COULD TEACH *ME!*
HERE, SQUIRT... LOOK AT MY HAND! I'LL SHOW YA A TRICK!
HAW! THAT'LL TEACH YOU NOT TO STAND AROUND WITH YOUR [illegible]-LOOKIN' FACE HANGIN' OUT!
THWAK!


"BUT, MY WARNING WAS TOO LATE... FOR CAIN... AND FOR THE WORLD!"
"WHOSOEVER TOUCHES THIS GEM SHALL POSSES THE POWER OF THE CRIMSON BANDS OF CYTTORAK! HENCEFORTH, YOU WHO READ THESE WORDS, SHALL BECOME ... FOREVERMORE ... A HUMAN JUGGERNAUT!!"
DROP IT, CAIN! DROP IT! YOU DON'T REALIZE WHAT THAT MEANS!!
"THOSE DESPERATE WORDS WERE NOT YET OUT OF MY MOUTH WHEN...!"
SOMETHING'S HAPPENING TO ME! I-I'M CHANGING..!
NOTHING CAN STOP IT NOW! CAIN MARKO NO LONGER EXISTS! AND, IN HIS PLACE...
15

The transformation of Cain Marko into the Juggernaut. [*X-Men* #12: Lee-Kirby(layouts)Toth(finished pencils)-Colletta]

who could assume the super-powers of mutants as long as he remained within a certain distance of them.

IT TOOK ME ALL THESE YEARS TO FREE MYSELF OF THE TONS OF STONE I HAD BEEN BURIED UNDER IN KOREA * ... BUT THE WAIT WAS WORTH IT!
BECAUSE I PLANNED THIS TRIUMPHANT MOMENT ALL THAT TIME!
SEE THE POWER OF THE JUGGERNAUT! MY BODY IS SO CHARGED WITH BOUNDLESS ENERGY THAT I EXUDE WAVES OF FORCE EVEN WHEN STANDING STILL!
HE'S SPEAKING THE TRUTH! THE SHEER AURA OF STRENGTH ABOUT HIM IS ENOUGH TO PUSH MY WHEELCHAIR BACK!

Juggernaut on the attack with his force field. [*X-Men* #13: Lee-Kirby(layouts)-Toth(finished pencils)-Sinnott]

This issue was not particularly memorable, but it was based on an interesting theme. The X-Men, even though they were born with the genes that gave them their powers, had somehow earned the right to them by using them for benevolent purposes. The Mimic, on the other hand, acted merely from motives of self-aggrandizement, was not entitled to the powers he copied from the X-Men's, and therefore lost them by the story's end. Rankin would regain his powers later and become the only non-mutant ever to join the X-Men; indeed, realizing that Rankin was too strong-willed to obey Cyclops's orders, Xavier even made him the team leader. Rankin's bullheadedness finally led to his expulsion from the group, but he redeemed himself in a battle with the similarly-powered Super-Adaptoid, at the cost of losing his "mimicking" ability. Years later Rankin died in the course of an adventure involving the Hulk and the Beast

With issue 20 Roy Thomas took over writing *The X-Men*, his first super-hero series. On his first term on the book Thomas did not introduce new concepts to match those brought in by Lee and Kirby. He was obviously interested in working with characters already introduced into the series (Lucifer, the Mimic, the Juggernaut), as well as heroes and villains from other Marvel books (Spider-Man, Dr. Strange, the Puppet Master, the Super-Adaptoid, Count Nefaria, the Mole Man, and Tyrannus). Nevertheless, Thomas did infuse the book with a new surge of vitality. Thomas began by having the X-Men foil plans for an invasion from outer space masterminded by Lucifer. He then sent them to rescue the nation's capital, which had been encased in a force field by Nefaria and was being held for ransom, and then transported them to a Latin American jungle

AND THEN, AT ANOTHER COMMAND FROM BOLIVAR TRASK, MORE OF THE EXPRESSIONLESS GIANTS SLOWLY STORM INTO THE STUDIO...
COME FORTH, MY SENTINELS! COME FORTH, GUARDIANS OF THE HUMAN RACE! LET ALL OF MANKIND WITNESS YOUR STRENGTH, YOUR TRUSTWORTHINESS, YOUR DEDICATION!
LET THE WORLD SEE HOW SAFE IT IS, WITH YOU ON GUARD, TO DEFEND IT AGAINST THE MUTANTS!

The Sentinels' creator sacrifices his life to pay for his mistakes. [*X-Men* #16: Lee-Kirby (layouts) -"Gavin" Roth —finished pencils) Colletta)

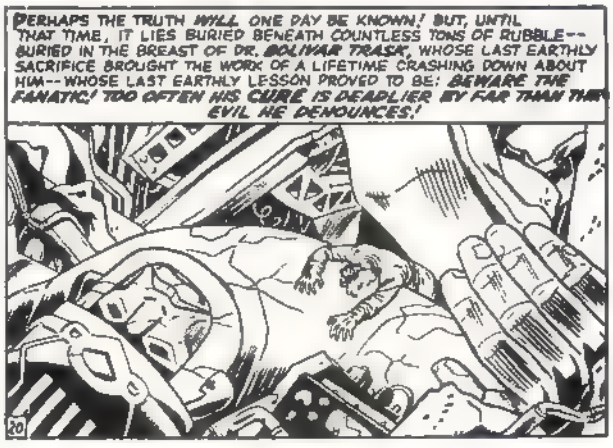
to battle a man who had been transformed into a being resembling the god Kulkulcan. Cyclops and Marvel Girl would journey into a mystical dimension to secure the key to defeating the Juggernaut, and finally the X-Men would find themselves fighting to save the world from being plunged into nuclear war by Factor Three, a conspiracy of evil mutants unwittingly led by an extraterrestrial alien. In short, the X-Men were operating on a far grander scale than they had before.

Thomas created some new minor opponents for the X-Men, such as the Cobalt Man and the Locust, and another two "villains" who would end up becoming part of the team. One was Changeling, about whom more will be said later. The other was a former Interpol agent who was forced against his will to serve as that conspiracy's slave: Sean Cassidy, alias the Banshee, a mutant from Ireland, who could use the vibrations of his powerful voice to propel himself in flight, shatter objects, or drive his foes into unconsciousness.

But perhaps Thomas's major achievement during his first term of writing *The X-Men* was his emphasis on characterization. He humanized the X-Men, making them clearly identifiable as people in their late teens or early twenties, who, apart from their powers, were much like their readers of the same ages. Thomas sensitively portrayed the hidden qualms and sorrows of the team members, but he also depicted their joys, bringing Scott and Jean closer together, pairing each of the others off with regular girlfriends, and presenting the X-Men out of uniform at a skating party, or a birthday party in Greenwich Village. The banter among the team members both when on the job and during their free time became wittier and fresher. The X-Men were now "alive" in their everyday identities as they were as super-heroes, and the characterization segments of an X-Men issue were often as memorable as the fight scenes. Thomas received no little help from the late Werner Roth, who had begun working on the series over Kirby's layouts, and took over full pencilling chores with issue 18 (and first worked under the pseudonym Jay Gavin). Roth could not come close to matching Kirby's dynamism, but had virtues of his own in bringing out the personalities of the characters he drew.

At the conclusion of the Factor Three adventure the X-Men had a "graduation" of sorts. Xavier declared that they had proved time and again their worthiness each to be considered as an individual super-hero, and not merely as a unit in a team. As a result, the X-Men replaced their blue and yellow uniforms, which had symbolized their membership in a school, with individualized costumes, which suggested that they were each capable of acting as independent adults. The X-Men now seemed less like a team of super-heroes in training than a team of fully capable individuals, just

Bolivar Trask unveils his mutant-hunting, robot creations, the Sentinels. [*X-Men* #14: Lee-Kirby(layouts)Toth(finished pencils)-Colletta]


PERHAPS THE TRUTH WILL ONE DAY BE KNOWN! BUT, UNTIL THAT TIME, IT LIES BURIED BENEATH COUNTLESS TONS OF RUBBLE-- BURIED IN THE BREAST OF DR. BOLIVAR TRASK, WHOSE LAST EARTHLY SACRIFICE BROUGHT THE WORK OF A LIFETIME CRASHING DOWN ABOUT HIM-- WHOSE LAST EARTHLY LESSON PROVED TO BE: BEWARE THE FANATIC! TOO OFTEN HIS CURE IS DEADLIER BY FAR THAN THE EVIL HE DENOUNCES!
20

The Mimic, the only non-mutant ever to join the X-Men.

like the Avengers. Hence the donning of the new costumes was a further indication of how far the X Men had evolved, and, indeed, they had been operating on their own for a year, while Xavier was Factor Three's captive. Very soon, they would be on their own again.

Grotesk, a vengeance-crazed humanoid who blamed the human race for wiping out his subterranean species, created a machine that would destroy the surface world through cataclysmic earthquakes. Xavier and Marvel Girl used their psionic abilities to contain the machine's power; the device exploded and Xavier, standing nearby, was killed—or so it appeared. Shortly afterwards Thomas left the series, and, by order of the F.B.I., the X-Men split up. Not only was the "school" concept now thoroughly dead, but so too was the idea of the X-Men as a team. The plan was that the Angel, the team of the Beast and Iceman, and the Cyclops-Marvel Girl duo would rotate as stars of the book. In retrospect, this seems rather a desperate attempt to do something—anything—to win new readers for the series, which had never been one of Marvel's most popular despite all of its virtues. After several very dull issues this experiment came to a well-deserved end, and the X-Men reunited to oppose the mutant army led by Mesmero and a being that appeared to be Magneto, but was later exposed as a robot. The phony Magneto attempted to convince a young green-haired mutant with magnetic powers named Lorna Dane that she was his daughter. But Lorna sided with the X-Men, assisted them on this and later occasions, and eventually adopted the *nom de guerre* of Polaris. Some issues in this sequence were illustrated by Jim Steranko, but his work here was but a shadow of his great, ground-breaking accomplishments on the *Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* series. Arnold Drake had scripted most of the issues since Thomas's departure, but although he had turned out fine work as writer of a very similar series, DC's *Doom Patrol*, he, surprisingly, never rose above the mediocre in his work for *X-Men*.

The X-Men finally was catapulted into the ranks of Marvel's best series with #56 and the beginning of the collaboration of writer Roy Thomas, penciller Neal Adams, and inker Tom Palmer on the book. This team did only eight issues together; Don Heck substituted for Adams on a ninth (#64), and Denny O'Neil took over for Thomas on the tenth (#65). But what brilliant issues those ten were! Many of the elements now associated with the "new" *X-Men* series in fact first appeared during this period. The cast began to expand with the additions of Lorna and Scott's long lost brother, Alex, otherwise known as Havok, and eventually, the return of Charles Xavier, who had not died after all. Hard as it might be to swallow, it seemed that the Professor had wanted privacy to prepare for a forthcoming alien invasion, so he allowed the shape-changing Changeling to impersonate him. Xavier had not seen fit to tell any of the X-Men apart from Jean the truth, even after the Changeling's demise. This means of Xavier's return remains a classic example of characterization distortion and credibility stretching in order to undo a previous error. Nonetheless, he *was* back, and *The X-Men* was a better book for his return.

Another addition to the cast was a sometime guest star, the fanatically idealistic and bad-tempered mutant Sunfire. In terms of *X-Men* history, the most remarkable aspect of Sunfire was that he was Japanese. The introduction of Sunfire, and of the Banshee before him, foreshadowed the creation of today's "international" team of X-Men.

Just as the characters could now be of different national backgrounds, so too the stories ranged far beyond the New York area. The X-Men had traveled outside America before, but neither Roth nor even Kirby in their work on the series had matched the impression created by Adams's breathtaking, visuals of ancient Egyptian temples or primeval Savage Landscapes. During this period the X-Men also traveled to

the snowy wastes of Tierra del Fuego, and finally, they battled an invading armada from outer space. The alien Lucifer had confined his activities to Earth, and indeed, looked like an Earthman, but now "space opera" had become a part of the series, as it would several times again in years to come. In marshalling the psychic power of all of humanity, and thus, through Adams's cameos showing various members of this worldwide legion, *The X-Man* travelled all over this planet

The art and writing combined to give these stories a dramatic power the book had rarely if ever known before. The X-Men were no longer struggling with adversaries on the level of Count Nefaria's Moldy Super-Villains Club from #22 and 23. Now they were in the big leagues, locked in combat with the Z'nox space fleet, Magneto once again, the brobdingnagian Living Monolith, the ghastly human-turned-pterodactyl Sauron, and the long-absent Sentinels, who in this incarnation absolutely could not be overcome by force. The X-Men themselves had always seemed comparatively weak in power as super-heroes go, but they proved fully capable of standing up to these villains of the first rank, especially force beams Adams endowed with monumental power. By now, by the way, Scott and Jean had acknowledged their love for one another, and seemed wholly comfortable in each other's company. Moreover, especially in her confrontation with Magneto in #63, Jean was again beginning to display the forceful personality she had demonstrated in the first issue, and would again in the future.

NO MATTER HOW HARD WE TRIED TO LIVE OUR OWN LIVES, BEING AN X-MAN ALWAYS SEEMED TO TAKE PRECEDENCE ! DIDN'T MIND THEN PERHAPS I SHOULD HAVE

Left corner above: the Master Mold, original leader of the Sentinels; left corner, below: Tyrannus (left) and the Mole Man (right). Clockwise, top to lower left, the Mimic, Lucifer, Count Nefaria and his flunkies (Plantman, Unicorn, Eel, Porcupine, Scarecrow), Cobalt Man, Warlock a.k.. Maha Yogi, Super-Adaptoid, Banshee, Kukulcan, Locust. [*X-Men* #138. Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

Whereas past *X-Men* stories had progressed at a fairly steady pace, the Thomas-Adams tales forged dynamically ahead, building to stunning climaxes. Surely, one thought at the time, *The X-Men* was not only better than ever before, but was here to stay.

But it did not stay. After a good but ordinary issue in which Thomas and artist Sal Buscema pitted the X-Men against the Hulk, the series was no more. The Thomas-Adams issues had come too late, and The Powers That Be cancelled *The X-Men* on the basis of the poor sales during the preceding period.

Eventually the magazine resumed publication, but only to reprint old stories for 27 issues. As far as new adventures were concerned, the characters had virtually disappeared into limbo. The Beast fared the best of the lot. In another strain on reader credibility, Hank McCoy stupidly drank a serum without knowing what it would do to him The serum made him look like a real beast, with fur all over his body, and pointed ears and teeth. For a short while the new version of the Beast starred in his own series in *Amazing Adventures*, the first super-hero series on which Steve Englehart served as regular writer. After that series died, Englehart moved the Beast into *The Avengers*, where he remained a welcome and delightful addition to the team until only recently.

The others fared less well Attempts to revive reader interest in the team seemed to center on the way they dressed, and were severely misguided. They turned up in one issue of *Marvel Team-Up* in ordinary street clothes despite the fact that the X-Men supposedly needed secret identities because of the widespread prejudice against mutants! It must have sunk in that super-heroes in ordinary clothes do not look very spectac ular, so in their future guest star roles during this "layoff" period, the X-Men were given their old

MINUTES LATER, THE SUPER-POWERED X-MEN PREPARE FOR COMBAT...
SO THIS IS YOUR FELICITOUS SURPRISE, JEAN --- YOU'VE REDESIGNED OUR COSTUMES!
I'M KINDA SORRY MY OWN RED BELT GETS ICED OVER!
I HOPED YOU'D LIKE THEM!
I WAS GETTING TIRED OF ALL THAT YELLOW IN THE OLD ONES...
I MUST ADMIT, THE RESULT IS A GRATIFYING INCREASE IN FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT!
THE ONLY THING IS, HOME ECONOMICS ISN'T EXACTLY MY STRONG POINT!
HEADS UP, EVERYONE... I HEAR THE PROFESSOR COMING!

The second version of the original X-Men's costumes debuted in *X-Men* #27. Thomas-Roth-Ayers.

costumes back. Unfortunately, these really *were* old costumes: the second version of the dull, lookalike uniforms they used to wear! The X-Men popped up in *The Avengers* for a run-in with Magneto, and a threesome showed up in *The Incredible Hulk* for lack of a better means of disposing of the issue's guest villain, the Juggernaut. Probably their most unusual guest roles were in a sequence of Englehart *Captain America* issues, which involved the kidnaping of mutants by the mysterious Number One of the sinister Secret Empire, whom many believe to have been the Marvel-Earth version of a certain United States president during the first half of the 1970s. But it was Captain America who was far and away the star of this tale, with the X-Men relegated to supporting roles and cameos. It seemed to this reader during that time that no one at Marvel knew what to do with the X-Men and worse, that no one really cared about them any more.

Yet one lesson a comics reader learns as the years go by is that no one disappears forever. Nineteen seventy-five saw the arrival of the first—and, as it turned out, only—issue of *Giant-Size X-Men*, featuring an assortment of new members from the old team. Soon thereafter, the regular *X-Men* comic began publishing new stories again, starting with #94, and the new members—Storm, Colossus, Wolverine, Nightcrawler, Banshee, and Thunderbird—had taken over. Cyclops remained as team leader, and, of course, Xavier was still the overall supervisor, but the other old members had left. The Beast was by now comfortably ensconced in *The Avengers*, Marvel Girl would soon return and taken on the new heroic figure of Phoenix, and the Angel and Iceman took off for California to found their own short-lived super-hero team in the almost equally short-lived series *The Champions*.

Two of the new members did not last long. Sunfire participated only in the adventure recorded in *Giant-Size X-Men* #1 and then left, being too self-important to want to function as a member of a team; whether he should even be considered an official X-Man is a matter of debate. Thunderbird was John Proudstar, an American Indian gifted with super-strength and super-speed, not to mention an abrasive personality that rivalled that of Wolverine's before the latter mellowed somewhat. Thunderbird was gone by the end of #95. He leapt upon the skycraft of the story's escaping villain, Count Nefaria, and shortly thereafter the skycraft ex-

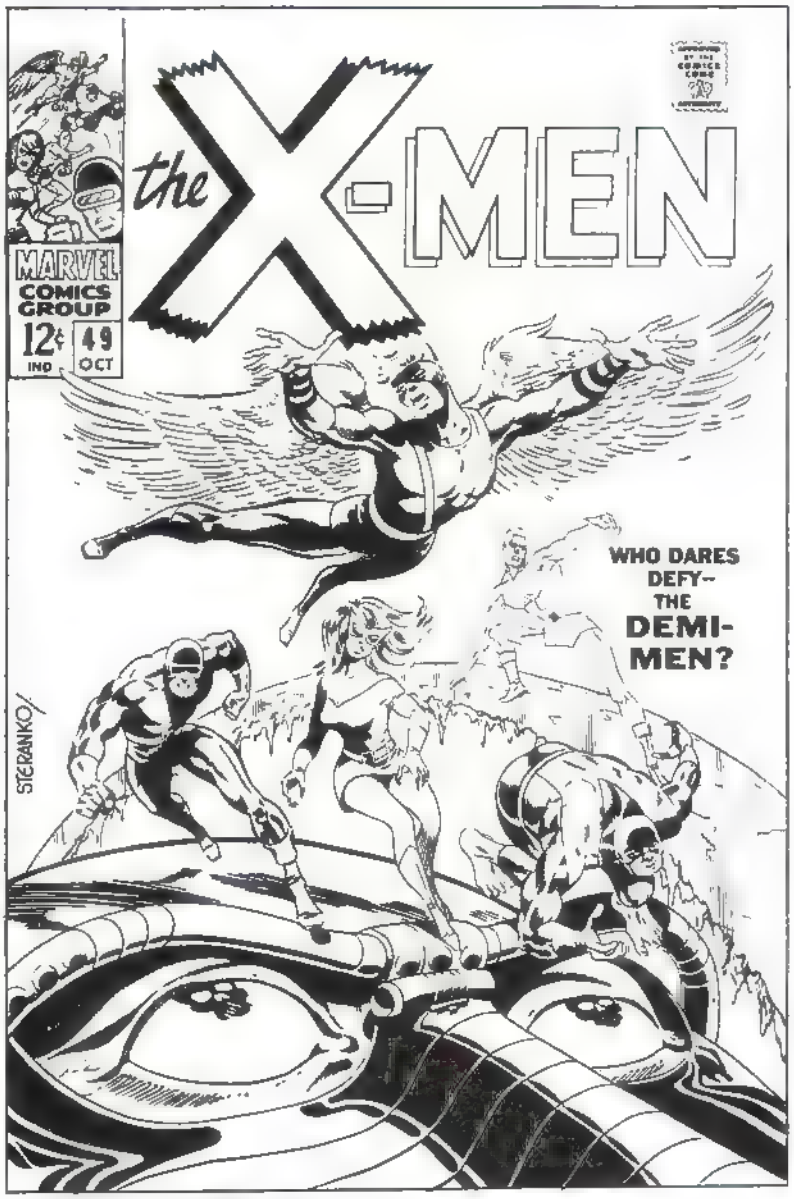
AND, THEY MOST CERTAINLY DO SEE --- FOR, AS THEY REGROUP A FEW MINUTES LATER...
OUR COSTUMES --- THEY'RE ALL DIFFERENT!
FOR THE FIRST TIME --- I REALLY LOOK LIKE AN ANGEL --- I GUESS!
IT APPEARS WE GOT OUR CHOICE OF DECORATOR COLORS, MR. WORTHINGTON!
EVEN I GOT NEW BOOTS --- AND GLOVES, BUT WHY, JEAN'IE?
AH, IF VERA COULD ONLY SEE ME NOW!
IT WAS YOUR IDEA, PROFESSOR!
WHY DON'T YOU TELL THEM JUST WHAT YOU RECENTLY TOLD ME?
I SHALL, JEAN --- WHEN THEY LET ME GET A WORD IN EDGEWISE!

Xavier: "The X-Men are scarcely children any more! They've each proved themselves a *hundred* times in deadly combat! It's time they looked like *individuals*—not products of an *assembly* line!" [*X-Men* #39. Thomas-Heck-Colletta]

ploded in mid-air. Nefaria, as we learned later in *The Avengers*, had used his technology to teleport himself to safety, but Proudstar had not been so lucky. Thunderbird was dead. So too, by the way, was another former member, the Mimic, who succumbed under heroic circumstances in an issue of *The Incredible Hulk*.

Writer Len Wein and artist Dave Cockrum had created the new team of X-Men, but Wein left the series after plotting the first two regularly sized issues, turning it over to a relative newcomer at Marvel, Chris Claremont, who has written every issue from 94 on. Claremont and Cockrum developed the series and the characters in ways that rapidly won the "new" *X-Men* book considerable popularity among Marvel readers. Later, under the regular creative team of Claroment, penciller John Byrne, inker Terry Austin, colorist Glynis Wein, and letterer Tom Orzechowski, each one of the foremost talents in his or her area in comics, *The X-Men* had unquestionably become the most popular and highly regarded current mainstream comics series in the eyes of comics fandom.

Much of this success is surely due to the characters themselves as, under Claremont, Cockrum, and Byrne, they developed more facets to their personalities than one expects to find in super-heroes. Xavier was no longer merely the stern, somewhat distant mentor but also a man full of unspoken, fatherly affection for his "students," who was in need of love himself (which he found from the alien princess Lilandra) and was capable of the deepest despair when his "children" seemed lost to him. Scott (Cyclops) began to deal with his introversion and repression, emerging as a more effective leader and a more emotionally responsive man. Jean (formerly Marvel Girl, and now Phoenix) became a complex individual, full of courage and assertiveness and simultaneously possessing sensitivity and deep emotional vulnerabilities.



Jim Steranko's rendition of the X-Men.

As for the new characters, there was Ororo (Storm), who spent her infancy in Harlem, her childhood in Cairo as a thief, and her adolescence in Kenya as a "goddess" who truly could control the weather, a woman who combines regality with a sisterly kindness to others. There was Logan (Wolverine), a Canadian soldier and secret agent whose mutant quick healing abilities enabled scientists to give him an artificial skeleton and retractable claws all made of the nearly indestructible (albeit fictional) alloy adamantium. Logan revels in exercising his animalistic killer instincts on his opponents, and yet he fears those same instincts, and yearns for an inner peace. Peter Rasputin (Colossus) has that peace He is a young member of a Russian farming family who has the ability to convert the substance of his body into an organic material as hard as steel, and in the process to gain tremendous strength. Yet despite his great power he retains a

AND THEN--BURSTING THRU EARTH AND MASSIVE STONE--AS THOUGH SHREDDING THE FABRIC OF TIME ITSELF--
GRABBED ME --BEFORE I COULD VEER AWAY!
CRUSHING ME-- LIKE A HELPLESS CANARY--!
THE PHARAOH --HE'S BECOME A GIANT!
THOOM
GOOD LORD!
FLY HIGHER, MAN -- HIGHER!!
YES--I WAS INDEED--HE WHO WAS CALLED-- THE PHARAOH!
BUT NOW-- I AM MORE --MUCH MORE!
NOW I AM HE--WHO SHALL RESTORE-- THE GLORY THAT WAS!
NOW--AM I--THE LIVING MONOLITH!

The explosive debut of the gigantic Living Monolith. [*X-Men* #56: Thomas-Adams-Palmer]

youthful innocence. He cannot quite understand evil, and finds himself enraged by those who give themselves entirely over to it. Kurt Wagner (Nightcrawler) resembles a demon, complete with a tail, and can teleport from one place to another, accompanied by a puff of smoke and a smell like brimstone. He has felt great anguish in his life, not surprisingly, but he usually leaves it behind and goes through life as a happy go-lucky self-styled ladies' man, still taking as much joy in his acrobatic prowess as he did when he was a young circus performer in his homeland of Germany. Sean Cassidy, the Banshee, who has retired from the group since losing his sonic powers, is less interesting as a person than the others, seeming usually to be a placid-easygoing Irishman. Yet there have been hints that he has been quite a lonely man, and as a result his love for mutant researcher Moira MacTaggart and for his long lost daugther Theresa (herself a mutant known as the Siryn) is very important to him. Finally, there is the newest member, the 13-year old Katharine "Kitty" Pryde, who as Sprite can "phase" through walls. Kitty's great appeal lies in the fact that apart from her powers she is a realistically portrayed girl in her early adolescence, discovering the problems and pleasures of moving towards adulthood.

The stories have been superbly dramatic and wonderfully varied in kind. Ororo returns to her parents' old apartment to find a horde of young heroin addicts living there (#122). The Beast discovers the X-Men have been mesmerized (by Mesmero) into becoming performers and "freaks" in a small time circus in Texas (#111). Magneto almost effortlessly captures the X-Men and imprisons them in a trap that reduces their control of their bodies to the level of an infant's, from which they nevertheless triumphantly break free (#112-113). The X-Men are ambushed by the Juggernaut and Banshee's nefarious brother in an Irish castle, and receive some unexpected assistance from leprechauns (#101-103). Kitty Pryde, alone in Xavier's mansion, confronts a terrifying supernatural demon, whom she must defeat to save her own life (#143). Jean Grey uses her newfound Phoenix powers to journey into a mystical crystal to prevent the universe from being obliterated (#108). The spirit of the adult Kate Pryde of a Sentinel-dominated alternate future takes possession of her younger self's body to try to prevent that future from taking place (#141-142).

The most impressive story in the "new" series, however, is surely the year-long serial that culminated in the death of Jean Grey in #137. The tale of how, psychically manipulated by her old enemy Mastermind and overwhelmed by her godlike power, Jean became the insane, evil Dark Phoenix was a startling and

Neal Adams and Tom Palmer's Cyclops lets loose. [*X-Men* #59]

penetrating—and also quite controversial—treatment of the perennial theme of the division of the human soul between good and evil. In the course of this serial the depiction of the long-standing relationship between Scott and Jean became more moving than ever before, and the story reached true tragic dimensions by its end The thematic strength of this storyline is demonstrated by the various reworkings of the tale since the original version's publication: a version by Mary Jo Duffy in *What If* concerning the Phoenix of an alternate universe who did not die and ended by destroying Earth; a sequence in *X-Men* #147 in which Storm fights free of a Dark Phoenix-like madness; "Kitty's Fairy Tale" in *X-Men* #153, an enchanting story in which Kitty retells the Dark Phoenix story in the manner of an Arabic Nights tale with a happy ending, and even the in-jokes on Claremont's page in the "jam" story in *The Spirit* #30.

It is the "new" X-Men and their adventures that are the primary subjects of these two volumes. This historical survey has come to its end; now it is the turn of some of the principal creative figures behind *The X Men* to speak.

TIME PASSED, AND AN UNEXPECTED EMERGENCY FORCED THE PROFESSOR TO RECRUIT NEW X-MEN HE FOUND:
KURT WAGNER -- NIGHTCRAWLER -- AGILE AS THE BEAST AND POSSESSING THE ABILITY TO TELEPORT. ORORO -- STORM -- AN ELEMENTAL, ABLE TO CONTROL THE WEATHER. PETER RASPUTIN -- COLOSSUS -- ABLE TO TRANSFORM HIS BODY INTO NEAR-INVULNERABLE ORGANIC STEEL. JOHN PROUDSTAR -- THUNDERBIRD -- FAST, STRONG, AGILE, A SUPER-TRACKER.
WOLVERINE -- WITH THE HYPER-SENSES OF AN ANIMAL, PLUS AN UNBREAKABLE ADAMANTIUM SKELETON AND CLAWS. SEAN CASSIDY -- BANSHEE -- MASTER OF THE SONIC SCREAM. AND SUNFIRE -- ABLE TO GENERATE NUCLEAR FIREBOLTS

The "new" X-Men of *Giant-Size X-Men* #1, as portrayed in *X-Men* #138. [Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

Interview with

ROY THOMAS

Roy Thomas has been one of the major creative figures in mainstream comic books from the mid-1960s onward. He played a leading role in comics' first fandom, especially through his co-editorship with Jerry Bails of the celebrated early fanzine Alter Ego. *Thomas was one of the first fans to enter the ranks of the comics professionals, and after very brief periods at Charlton and DC, came to Marvel in 1965. At first he was virtually the only other writer at Marvel besides Stan Lee, and he rapidly took over series after series. Thomas wrote* The Avengers *for a memorable run of about 70 issues, during which time he created the present-day versions of the Vision and Black Knight and Henry Pym's persona of Yellowjacket, and chronicled the epic events of the intergalactic Kree-Skrull War. Other series that Thomas wrote include* Doctor Strange, The Sub-Mariner, The Incredible Hulk, Sgt. Fury, Daredevil, The Amazing Spider-Man, The Fantastic Four, *and* Thor.

It was Thomas who was responsible for Marvel's acquisition of the rights to do comics about the great heroes of Robert E. Howard, including Conan, King Kull, and Solomon Kane. For ten years Thomas was the sole writer of Marvel's Conan stories, which appeared in Conan the Barbarian, The Savage Sword of Conan, Savage Tales, Giant-Size Conan, King Conan, *and a syndicated newspaper strip. It was also Thomas who transformed a minor Howard character into the swordswoman known as Red Sonja*

Thomas was instrumental in acquiring the comics rights to Star Wars *for Marvel long before anyone knew it would become such a successful film series, and wrote Marvel's adaptation of the original film. He also devised the magazine* Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction *for Marvel, created and wrote most of the World War II super-hero series* The Invaders, *and had a hand in the creation of such characters as Iron Fist and the Man-Thing*

As editor-in-chief of Marvel in the early 1970s Thomas presided over the doubling of the company's output of comics, and brought many of the best writers and artists in mainstream comics into Marvel

After several years as a Marvel writer-editor, Thomas went to DC, where he has worked on Batman, *helped to create* Captain Carrot and His Amazing Zoo Crew, *and now writes two more of his creations,* Arak, Son of Thunder *and the super-hero team series* All-Star Squadron, *as well as* Wonder Woman.

The subject of this interview, however, is the very first super-hero series Thomas wrote on a regular basis, The X-Men, *which he scripted from issue 20 through 43 (he also plotted 44), and again, with but one exception, from 55 through 66, the final issue of the "old" series. As this interview reveals, Thomas also had a hand in the creation of the "new" series.*

This interview was conducted in March, 1981, was transcribed by Kim Thompson, and was edited by Roy Thomas and myself.

—P S

PETER SANDERSON: *I understand you proposed the idea of the new* X-Men*?*

ROY THOMAS: In the general sense, I got it going, yes. What happened is that when Al Landau, Jim Galton's predecessor, was the president of Cadence

NOW, RAVAGERS OF MY ANCESTRAL HOMELAND...
BUT, THE NEXT SOUL-SCORCHING INSTANT...
THE INFERNAL DOME STILL STANDS!
SOME NEW FORCE HALTED MY SOLAR BLASTS!
KRA-
WOW!
YOU DESTROYED WITH HEAT... AND NOW YOUR CAPITAL SHALL BE ENGULFED BY IT!
THE POWER OF THE ATOM AND THE POWER OF THE SUN... ARE ONE!
YET--THAT IS NOT POSSIBLE!!
17

Sunfire. [*X-Men* #64. Thomas-Heck-Palmer]

back in that '73, '74 period right before I left, there was a meeting that he and Stan [Lee] and I were at—I suspect probably also John Verpoorten, maybe one or two other people—in which Landau mentioned that it would be a good idea to have an international team of some sort. You see, he had his own company called Transworld, which at that time was reselling Marvel's work overseas by the page. And he knew that if we, for example, had big markets in three or four countries and we had a team that had or three or four characters in it, one from each country, we'd have a terrific hit on our hands overseas. So the new *X-Men* was actually born to tap our foreign market. He mentioned this general, vague idea just in passing, without pressing for it; I countered that I thought it was an excellent idea and I thought we should do it with *The X-Men*. And I explained to him and to Stan, who immediately liked the idea, that, after all, *The X-Men* had been an off-and-on mild hit at various times, and it had actually been selling well right around the time that Neal [Adams] and I had finished up doing our last few issues. Two or three issues around that time sold rather well and the others didn't sell that badly, just not quite well enough for the book to survive. However, Martin Goodman, the publisher at that time, was on an economy kick. He wanted to bring the book back but he didn't want to spend the money [laughter] so he just did reprints for a while. Since obviously there was some sort of market for *The X-Men* at various times, under [Jack] Kirby and Neal and myself and Stan, we should be able to revive it.

I had earlier had an idea—I think a *Marvel Team-Up* that Gerry [Conway] or someone wrote reflected this—to bring back the X-Men in the vein of the first couple of issues of *The Fantastic Four*, the team minus costumes. Because the five original X-Men were so individual-looking anyway, with wings and glasses and shapes and ice and one being a woman and so forth, they could be told apart without costumes. I had even at one time proposed and written a tiny piece of an *X-Men* novel that was based on that idea, since the costume idea doesn't work in most media. Plainly, in this case, I thought it would be a good idea to have this international group. I don't think it was acted on right away, although I got a lot of encouragement, but soon after that we got the go-ahead to do the X-Men that way. Len or Dave Cockrum would have to tell you more details, but they were assigned to the book because they seemed like a perfect team.

SANDERSON: *Len said originally it was he and Mike Friedrich*

THOMAS: That could very well be. That's something that I just don't remember. The only other part I had with it was that by this time, we had somehow dropped

THEN, WITH SILENCE-SHATTERING SHRILLNESS... THE BANSHEE ATTACKS !!!
EEEEEE
THIS IS IT... THE FINAL CONFRONTATION. MY SONIC POWERS HAVE RETURNED TO THE R MIGHTIEST PEAK!
AND, I MUST EMERGE THE VICTOR. . FOR REASONS THE X-MEN CANNOT GUESS!
15

The Banshee in his initial role as the X-Men's unwilling enemy. [*X Men* #28· Thomas-Roth-Ayers]

the idea of looking for any particular countries. I think we just started doing them—after all, I had already introduced the Banshee earlier, an Irishman. My original idea—I don't think they used it, I never read enough issues closely to know—was that a couple of the members like Cyclops and Marvel Girl (with the others guest-starring occasionally) would have this giant ship, sort of Noah's Ark thing, that would fly around with a portable cloud around it, and would hover over various countries in search of different X-Men and that would get them into adventures

SANDERSON: *So there would be additional new X-Men coming in all the time?*

THOMAS: Yes. However, I obviously expected to get up to about four, five, or six characters that would be pretty regular and then of course you bring others in, you take them out. It was in line with the thing that I'd originally wanted to do right after I took over *The X-Men* as my first regular super-hero assignment in the '60s, which was to bring in an Oriental X-Man. I wanted to bring in a Japanese-American X-Man, whose mother had been caught in the Hiroshima or Nagasaki blast, and who at that time could have been just about the same age as the other X Men. Eventually this became Sunfire. Stan, however, would not allow me to add to the X-Men, and so I became kind of frustrated at the beginning of the book and I began to lose interest. At that particular period, Stan was very conservative about the books He did a lot of heavy editing on my first *Iron Man* story, and then took away an individual credit on the first super-hero thing that I ever did. Later he made me take Captain America, Thor, and Iron Man out of *The Avengers*, even though the book in those days never sold well without at least *one* of them in residence.

Anyway, he wouldn't let me add to the number of X-Men. Thus, as I said, I became very frustrated because on the one hand I really liked what Stan was writing, but on the other hand I felt, as opposed to a few years later when Stan had relinquished much of his hold on things and was more open to ideas, that at this stage, he was a little bit too conservative about the changes. I wasn't interested in sweeping changes, but I thought *The X-Men* needed something. It wasn't the greatest-selling book in the world anyway, and about the time that I had taken it over Kirby had suddenly stopped drawing it and given it to Werner Roth, who, while a good artist, was a very quiet artist, and the book never really was that huge under him and me, and I don't think it would have been under him and Stan either. My only other part in the new *X-Men* beside getting it going and the international idea in general was to make a few vague suggestions to Len that even I couldn't remember. Probably I may have approved a general kind of line-up, but it was basically Len's idea, I think.

The only other thing I suggested to him, over lunch, was that I thought it was time we had a Canadian hero. There was talk about names like Captain Canuck, Captain Canada, things of that sort, and I suggested that since we had a Canadian market and I felt guilty about not having more Canadian characters in the comics,

AND, I CHOOSE... EVIL!
AN EVIL SO GREAT - SO MONUMENTAL THAT ONLY ONE NAME IN ALL THE ANNALS OF LITERATURE WILL CONTAIN !!
THE NAME OF... SAURON!!!
THE NAME OF TOLKIEN'S ULTIMATE VILLAIN
- THAT DARK LORD WHO PERSONIFIED EVIL, WHO WAS TRULY EVIL INCARNATE...!
17

Sauron the Were-pterodactyl. [*X-Men* #60· Thomas-Adams-Palmer]

The X-Men should have a character that I suggested be called the Wolverine because that animal inhabits Canada as well as the Northern United States and would be familiar to both. He could be a Canadian and be very fierce. I was thinking of someone much like what evolved, a very fierce character worth his weight in wildcats, that kind of thing, a little like Wildcat or Atom, only with more power.

SANDERSON: *Cockrum says he had come up with a Wolverine character before that and told you about it.*

THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO... ONLY THAT THEY ARE FILLED WITH BONE DEEP NEED TO BE FREE--
WE CAN NOT COMBAT WHAT HAS NO FACE... NO FORM--!
-- THIS IS AGONY BEYOND IMAGINING!
THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO... ONLY THAT THEY ARE GRIPPED WITH AN URGENCY... A FIERCE DESIRE TO RIGHT THE WRONGS OF CENTURIES --
TO STAY LONGER WOULD BE MADNESS!
NO X'NOX CAN SURVIVE SUCH MENTAL CORROSION--!
I SENSE OUR WILL TO CONQUER BEING EATEN AWAY!
AND WITHOUT THAT, WE ARE NOTHING!

Adams links the minds of all humanity to create a psychic force to combat the

THOMAS: It very well could have been. On the other hand I don't have any conscious memory of his having done that. And of course it doesn't take much brains for either of us to come up with a name like Wolverine anyway. Animal characters are a big thing. Dave may have done that. On the other hand, it's like when I invented the Banshee. I got an angry letter from a kid who said he'd once sent in a letter to me, Stan, or somebody else suggesting a character called the Banshee. And of course I thought it was just ridiculous [laughter] because names like "Wolverine" or "Banshee" are just names A name like Captain Marvel is a made-up name, maybe, but all the others—Superman, Batman they're all just grabbed from somewhere

SANDERSON: *Len credits you with the name of Storm*

THOMAS: You're kidding! Really?

SANDERSON: *He said she was going to be named "Typhoon" and nobody liked it and you said, "why don't you call her Storm?"*

THOMAS: Really? It's funny. That's really weird, because I don't remember that. The funny thing is, I didn't and don't like the name Storm as a name for that character because we had Johnny Storm already existing, and it must have been one of those things that just popped into my head. Because when the character came out I was thinking, "This isn't much of an idea" [laughter]. But I'll take the blame if Len wants to give it to me. I certainly don't think it was one of my best ideas, because I don't think Marvel should have had a character called Storm when they had Johnny Storm running around in one of their two top-selling books. She's a good character, though. And there isn't much confusion nowadays anyway.

SANDERSON: *Now how did the Banshee get created? Did you intend him to just be a one shot character?*

THOMAS: Well, at Marvel at that stage, you never created a character just intending it to be a one-shot character, because you knew they had a way of popping back, even the most unpopular characters in the world [laughter] like Diablo, which I notice John Byrne chose for the first *Fantastic Four* Diablo is one of the least popular characters Stan and Jack ever came up with, which Stan especially always loathed. In the case of the Banshee, though, I just like the idea of a banshee character with sonic powers and the only thing I really agonized over that I recall at the time was whether to make it a woman or not. Is there a female Banshee now?

SANDERSON: *There's a female Banshee named the Siryn; she's his daughter*

THOMAS: She doesn't call herself Banshee?

SANDERSON: *No*

THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO, THESE WHO STRUGGLE... THEY KNOW ONLY THAT SUDDENLY, THEY ARE FILLED WITH AN ALL-CONSUMING DETERMINATION--
LEADER THE PAIN!
WE ARE BEING ATTACKED... BUT BY WHAT?!
THESE MASSES THAT BURN OUR CONSCIOUSNESS--
...THEY ARE NOT NATURAL!
IT IS MORE THAN WE CAN STAND!
THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO... ONLY THAT SYMPATHY AND MERCY WELL UP WITHIN THEM, AND LEAP FORTH--
17

alien Z'nox [Adams(plot)-O'Neil(script)-Adams-Palmer]

THOMAS: But anyway she has the same costume. And I could see why maybe they wouldn't [give her the same name] if they wanted to keep the original around. But one thing I felt bad about after that first issue, was that I thought she should have been a woman. I think I must have wanted to create an adult, leprechaunish character, which Werner and I did, and I think I let that overrule the fact that of course I knew that a Banshee was really a female. I think I made a mistake there—one of a number I've made in my life But the character seemed pretty popular from the beginning even among the people who knew it was supposed to be a woman.

SANDERSON: *It's not directly stated in the first story (#28) that he was Irish. Did that evolve by accident?*

THOMAS: No, it was always implicit in there. I think I just didn't play it up that terribly much, because I figured that anyone who's interested in Banshee would know this. I always intended him as actually being from Ireland as such —he could have been Irish-American, or whatever—I don't really remember. After 10 to 20,000 pages [laughter] you get a little confused, but I do remember the character better than most. I can still see the splash page in my mind as it came in and as it went out. I remember arguing with Stan over little things in the story: I think it had an O'Neil Tobacco Shop and a Kuramoto Fishing Supplies —and I recall Stan's not liking that. It's funny the things you remember after years in comics, that somebody will remember some entire issue, and you'll remember, "Oh yeah, we had an argument over this one panel in *Not Brand Ecch* #1 and I almost quit" [laughter] or something like that. You'll remember something that the general readership will never notice or care about, and vice versa, because the priorities of the people in the field are so different from those of those who are reading the comics

SANDERSON: *So it seems that Stan worked very closely with you on the first issues*

THOMAS: No, not at all. When I say that he objected to it, that was after it was pencilled and inked, because it was lettered in after I wrote it, but he had nothing to do with it. Stan let his writers do the writing. Even that first *Iron Man* of mine in *Tales of Suspense* #73, on which I should have received a writer's credit even though he edited it very heavily (but no more than a Julie Schwartz or Mort Weisinger would have done), was largely my script, written from his plot. Then came the first couple of Doctor Stranges which he had me write and rewrite and so forth. After those first few and one or two *Sgt. Furys* with a lot of writing and rewriting, Stan realized, "This is crazy!" In all those years, except for Larry Lieber, he hadn't managed to turn out any new writers. For some reason he never quite warmed to Denny O'Neil, whom I brought in. I think he

and Denny had more trouble relating than, say, Stan and I did at the time... But anyway, after about three or four stories, about one or two issues of anything, and then maybe the first *X-Men* that he went over and the plot of the second one, which was the Washington D.C. thing [#22-23], he never again even looked at the plots. The only problem was that if I wanted to do something new like introduce a new X-Man, I had to go to him, and I was very disappointed and I kind of pulled back for a couple of years there from trying to create things in the books until the period with the Vision later in the '60s, because I felt Stan had a natural resistance to ideas that were a little different from what he might do himself Which is of course natural to all of us But he didn't work closely with me or with much of anybody on any of these things. I doubt if he knows or remembers the Banshee character. He probably didn't notice it at the time. But he did notice the name on the store and well, he felt it would make people laugh and

YOU WISHED TO KNOW WHY YOU ARE ON TRIAL, X-MEN! THEREFORE, I, THE MUTANT-MASTER, SHALL NOW TELL YOU!
YOU ARE ACCUSED OF BETRAYING THE CAUSE OF YOUR FELLOW MUTANTS -- BY ACTING AS THE FRIENDS OF THE HOMO SAPIENS!
FOR THAT, YOU MUST DIE!
YOU ARE HONORED, MY YOUNG FRIENDS! FEW MORTALS ARE PRIVILEGED TO HEAR EVEN SO FEW WORDS FROM THE MASTER!
BUT, WE HAVE WASTED ENOUGH TIME!

The Mutant Master, the disguised alien who heads the evil mutant conspiracy known as Factor Three and his second-in-command, the shape-shifting Changeling, who would one day impersonate Charles Xavier. [*X-Men* #37: Thomas-Andru-Heck]

Grotesk, whose machinations led to the seeming death of Professor X. [*X-Men* #41: Thomas-Heck-Tuska]

distract from the story, and in a very real sense he's absolutely right. These little gag-things and so forth in the background, they're fun but I think they're very distracting and for me they always ruined the reality of the story.

SANDERSON: *How did the idea for the new Beast come about?*

THOMAS: [pause] I'm not exactly sure, except that I was instrumental in it in some way or other. It may have been my suggestion or it may have been an off-hand suggestion by Stan that I worked on. I do know that the idea of the Beast would be the harness thing and so forth—that idea was mine. But of course it was based on things like Warren Worthington strapping down his wings. And otherwise it was just kind of a throwaway book which turned out not to sell anyway—the grey color I guess didn't help—and for anything else you'd probably have to ask a guy like Steve [Englehart]. He had just written one mystery story with a pterodactyl in it, under my direction. I liked his writing and gave him the Beast book; he came by my apartment and I pointed out to him a few little things, such as that there was five times as much copy in some of the balloons as Artie Simek could possibly

"WHILE ENGAGED IN TELEPATHIC STAR-SCANNING, I HAD ACCIDENTALLY LEARNED OF THE IMPENDING Z'NOX INVASION, AND WAS DESPERATELY SEEKING A MEANS OF COUNTERING IT WHEN..."
#ISH #38! -SNAPPY STAN
WHAT IN THE NAME OF--?
HOW DID YOU GET PAST OUR ALARMS?
IT WASN'T HARD... FOR A GUY OF MY EXPERIENCE!
REMEMBER ME, PROF?
YES, I YOU CALL YOURSELF THE CHANGELING!
XAVIER, I GOT A FAVOR TO ASK! I JUST COME FROM A DOC'S...
I'M A GONER! I GOT MAYBE SIX MONTHS LEFT TO LIVE!
I WANT YOU TO-- BECOME ME!!
NOTHIN' EASIER... FOR A GUY WITH MY TALENT!
AND I WANNA MAKE 'EM COUNT! I WANNA MAYBE MAKE UP FOR SOME OF THE ROTTEN THINGS I'VE DONE...
I SENSE YOUR SINCERITY-- AND I DO HAVE A TALK FOR YOU, IF YOU'RE WILLING!
NOW I'VE GOT YOUR LOOKS--BUT NOT YOUR MENTAL POWERS!
7

A flashback shows how the Changeling came to impersonate Professor Xavier while the latter was preparing for the Z'nox invasion. [Adams(plot)-O'Neil (script)-Adams-Palmer]

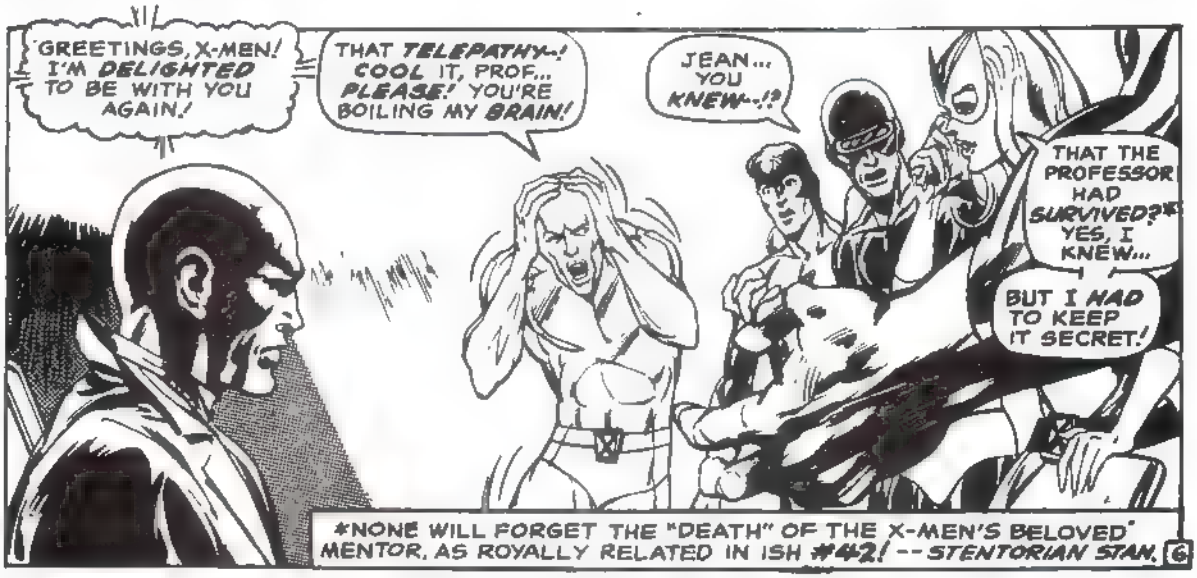
SANDERSON: *Really? That's interesting.*

THOMAS: And that's true of my first *Avengers*, too [#35] I started in the middle of a Living Laser story that had already been plotted, and I talked to Don Heck about Stan's plot; it turned out it was just a conversation [between them]—but the thing is, a few minutes' conversation can be very useful. I plotted a few books in a few minutes too, but that was on very rare occasions with me. It was more common with Stan. Strangely enough—I could be wrong about this, I wasn't looking at vouchers—but I don't believe that guys like Don and Werner, even though they almost did plotting on books (though they weren't really geared for it like a Kirby was, who's been a writer), were reimbursed separately for that I think it was one of the sources of resentment they had against Stan and against any other writer that came in, even though he gave them a full plot They began to feel—some of them, at least—that they were doing more work then they ought to, that the writer therefore wasn't contributing and maybe that grew out of the fact that Stan got so busy he was turning out more and more *de facto* power to the artists Some of them liked it, some of it merely resented it, but Werner wanted to do it, I suppose I didn't really know him until I began to work with him The original idea was for Werner just to keep plotting *The X Men* and for letter in there, and a few other things Otherwise I realized right away that I had my hands on a writer who had stumbled in as a summer replacement for Gary Friedrich and who had not really written before but who was going to be quite valuable And even though the Beast series was a bomb, and a couple of other things Steve did didn't work out, so many things did work out that the relationship was very successful

SANDERSON: *What was it like working with Werner Roth? What kind of person was he?*

THOMAS: Well, Werner was a very nice man. He came on just one or two issues before as a real penciller, did one or two issues with Stan. It was a weird relationship, because I was given that first issue [#20] to dialogue. That one I think Stan had plotted with Werner, or it was mostly Werner's plot with a little help from Stan, who wasn't doing that much plotting in those days, with Kirby or anyone else. The artists were doing a lot of their own plotting back then.

The death of the Changeling in his guise as Professor Xavier. [*X-Men* #42 Thomas-Heck-Tuska]


GREETINGS, X-MEN! I'M DELIGHTED TO BE WITH YOU AGAIN!
THAT TELEPATHY--! COOL IT, PROF... PLEASE! YOU'RE BOILING MY BRAIN!
JEAN... YOU KNEW--!?
THAT THE PROFESSOR HAD SURVIVED?* YES, I KNEW...
BUT I HAD TO KEEP IT SECRET!
*NONE WILL FORGET THE "DEATH" OF THE X-MEN'S BELOVED MENTOR, AS ROYALLY RELATED IN ISH #42! --STENTORIAN STAN.
6

Xavier returns from "death" in *X-Men* #65. [Adams(plot)-O'Neil(script)-Adams-Palmer]

me just to dialogue it, but I wouldn't have any of that—I was that assertive, even at that time—and I said that I wanted to plot the stories so that by the second issue I was plotting them. Otherwise we had a very nice relationship and Werner was a very good artist. The only problem was that he was a little like someone like Jose Delbo on *Wonder Woman* now; he was just a very quiet artist. He could draw very well, but he was just not going to excite anyone.

SANDERSON: *Now how did you work along with Neal Adams?*

THOMAS: Well, it was sort of start-and-stop. At first I loved it. I had been doing two or three issues of *The X-Men* to try to revitalize it because it wasn't doing too well at the time Neal came in. I'd met Neal once or twice in passing and I'd seen his work. I was very pleased when he came in, and I was prepared to drop off the book. Then Neal asked me, or mentioned to Stan first, whichever it was, that he'd like me to stay on because he liked my writing. I was quite flattered, and we had a nice collaboration The only problem, and Neal confirmed this in one of the books that did an interview with him, was that after one cover or so, Neal says—I had very little to do with the covers at that time, and I think the covers were the main problem with the sales of that book—that Neal and Stan couldn't quite agree on covers so by Neal's own account he began to just do what he referred to as either "throwaway covers" or covers that he just didn't think much about As a result the most important page in the book was often quite lackluster. The worst-conceived stuff on most of the issues were the covers, because of Neal's reaction to Stan's reaction [laughter], and as a result that book just lacked that extra couple percent of sales. I remember the issue with Ka-Zar real big on the cover [#62] sold really well and the next to last issue, [#65], the one Denny ended up dialoguing—

SANDERSON: *That you plotted?*

THOMAS: No, actually, Neal totally plotted it. Neal wanted to do one plot totally. All the others were kind of collaborative plots We didn't go around at that time worrying about plotting credits. Now they design up to fifteen credits on these things especially at Marvel. I feel kind of like a fool lately because there are all these characters in whose creation I had a hand, but I never bothered to slap a credit on and so nobody knows I did them Nowadays of course [laughter] we all go out and stake it out like we're fighting for movie or TV credit. But at that time—

Anyway, Neal wanted to do one plot. He had an idea he wanted to do. Usually they grew out of my ideas or were collaborative. The Sauron character was originally going to be an energy vampire a la Man-Bat, but we decided we couldn't go that route at that stage —this was before Man-Bat—so we did a pterodactyl-man, and thus indirectly left Man-Bat to DC. The other stories mostly came from my original ideas, and then Neal would expand on them a lot.

But this particular story [#65] he wanted to plot, so he mentioned it to me and I said, "Well, sounds good," and then at the last minute, I don't remember why, I couldn't write that one, so I asked Denny to write it. The story would have been the same—well, the writing would have been different maybe, but the pictures and the whole thing would have been the same no matter who did it because it was already totally pencilled before Denny ever saw it. We had Marie Severin do a cover for it and that issue sold [laughter] without Neal's

cover. Then there was the Sunfire story [#64] which Don Heck did with [Tom] Palmer inking it to make it look like Neal as much as he could. I think those three issues, only one of which had a Neal cover, were some of the best-selling ones, near the end of the series

SANDERSON: *It looked like a lot of Adams layouts in the Sunfire issue.*

THOMAS: No, there weren't any. There was no Adams in there. It was all Don Heck and Tom Palmer trying to look like Adams. Heck was given some of Neal's stuff to look at This is the bane of Heck's existence, that while he himself is an original artist, his style was for westerns and other things. He was not naturally and never has been a super-hero artist. He had to adjust to it because things went that way after 1961. He suddenly had to become a super-hero artist and I don't think he's ever felt totally comfortable with it. That's one of his problems as an artist But he was told to "make it look like Neal Adams." Nowadays [laughter] it's not that hard to find someone to do that,

COFFEE A GO-GO
A SURPRISE PARTY IN GREENWICH VILLAGE YET! HOW LUCKY CAN A GUY BE!
THAT'S THE LEAST I COULD DO FOR MY FAVORITE SPENDTHRIFT'S 23'D BIRTHDAY!
DON'T ANSWER THAT! I'LL YOU TASTE YOUR CAKE, BOBBY! YELDA BAKED IT HERSELF!
IT WAS GREAT OF YOU TO INVITE US, ZELDA!
I HOPE YOU'RE EQUALLY ECSTATIC WHEN IT'S CLEAN-UP TIME, MR SUMMERS
WE SHALL BE HAPPY I HAVEN'T BEEN TO A PARTY IN AGES!

The X-Men as normal young adults at play: Bobby Drake (Iceman) has a surprise birthday party. [*X-Men* #32: Thomas-Roth-Tartaglione]

but back then it was. So anyway those three issues sold, only one of which had Neal's cover [#62], and that one had the X-Men very small on it. Maybe our secret was [laughter] we should not have had Neal do any covers, or we should have never had the X-Men big on the covers Neal did, or something.

Next, it sort of gestated for a number of years as a reprint book, with my plan to bring them back as plainclothes heroes and various things. I always liked the X-Men, so there I was trying to revitalize them by putting them in plainclothes and making them more realistic, revitalize them and make them an original group. I knew that sooner or later it would probably work out because they were a really good idea. Of course, I never figured that in America the new *X-Men* would be so big a hit, and I suppose that's owed to the Wein-Cockrum team and later on especially to Chris [Claremont] and John Byrne, who came on and just did it magnificently.

SANDERSON: *Now why did you kill off Professor Xavier, split up the X-Men, then put them back together and then bring back Xavier?*

THOMAS: Basically, because the magazine wasn't selling too well. We had been trying various things, and Stan approved or was informed of—maybe it was even his idea, I don't know—the idea of killing Professor X. Although I did it with kind of a leeway. It was always my intention that it could end up being the Changeling. It wasn't something I came up with later.

Also, since *The X-Men* wasn't selling, Stan had this idea that we'd be the first company to have a different title above every issue [of a magazine], heralding a different character. And so we did that for four or five issues. I don't remember how well it worked, obviously it didn't work very well for very long. Some of these ideas would work for an issue or two, then they wouldn't. Sometimes the new issues *would* revitalize the title, like that Captain Marvel costume change of direction that Gil and I did. It saved the book *twice* You never really know how these thing are going to work until you try them out. Some of them work and

Bobby (Iceman) Drake and his girlfriend Zelda. [*X-Men* #27: Thomas-Roth-Ayers]

TWO DOGS AND A DOUBLE HELPIN' OF SUDS! THAT'LL BE A DOLLAR EVEN, CHARLIE!
UH, ZEL... I'M NOT SURE JUST HOW TO BREAK THIS, BUT I SEEM TO HAVE SPRUNG A HOLE IN MY POCKET, AND...
SAY NO MORE, DIAMOND JIM! YOU'RE LUCKY YOU'RE GOING WITH A WORKING GAL!
WHEN I GO OUT WITH YOU, I ALWAYS BRING ALONG MY BILLFOLD!

MEANWHILE, THE USUALLY LOQUACIOUS HANK IS HAVING HIS OWN PROBLEMS...
NOW, ABOUT THOSE WALK-OUTS, MR. McCOY...
YOU MUST ENDEAVOR TO UNDERSTAND, BEAUTEOUS ONE! THE FACTORS WHICH CONTROL MY LIFE ARE MANY AND VARIED!
CIRCUMSTANCES! EVENTS! THE TUG AND SWAY OF HISTORY! ER, UM...
I SOMEHOW SENSE YOU ARE UNIMPRESSED BY MY VERBAL VIRTUOSITY!

Hank (Beast) McCoy and his girlfriend Vera. [*X-Men* #27: Thomas-Roth-Ayers]

some of them don't. If they work, you herald them, and if they don't, you forget about them and go on to something else. At that time I had given the book up to Gary Friedrich as writer, but it still wasn't selling and that's when Neal came in and wanted to do *The X-Men* and it worked out *fairly* well. The operation was a success, but the patient—didn't exactly die, but he went into a coma for several years.

SANDERSON: *One thing I liked about the stories you did with Roth are all the sequences you did portraying the X-Men as normal adolescents, having birthday parties [#32], skating parties [#29], dates with normal teen agers—that seemed to be very important to the stories*

THOMAS: I was trying to get that Spider-Man touch in there, and Werner had the same kind of romance background [as John Romita]—I was aping *Spider-Man* in certain ways, and the difference was I was working with Werner instead of John so in some ways it wasn't quite as successful. I didn't introduce that character Vera who was the Beast's girlfriend—Stan did—but I brought her back and played her up. I liked the Mimic character so I brought him in, and introduced Candy—I guess her name was based on the character in the Terry Southern novel—and I had fun, I'd write these weird poems, like "Happiness is a Warm Puppet."

SANDERSON: *For Bernard the Poet*

THOMAS: Right. I liked the line "Happiness is a Warm Puppet " To me, there's more truth in that than there is in Charles Schulz [laughter] when you really think about it. So I enjoyed fooling around with these things. I remember putting in a couple of lines from the Monkees song "I'm a Believer" [in one panel] because it was playing in the background at the time. I devoted a lot of time to comics in those days, because I was single, and had been in the field only a couple of years, I was really heavily into it and could devote my full energies to comics.

SANDERSON: *Many people are very fond of the relationship between Scott and Jean. Do you think that there was something special about it that set it apart from the other romances in Marvel comics?*

THOMAS: In the early days, I think the major thing was the particular kind of tragedy of Scott which was that he could never really take off his glasses and look at someone without taking a chance of destroying the person. Otherwise it didn't seem that special to me. I think it grew into something gradually. We all tried to work it around. I didn't think of it as being a superior romance to others that were going in Marvel comics, no, except that I thought Scott was an interesting character: a guy who wears glasses and can't take them off without blasting something is a character who in his own way has as much as if not more tragedy than the Thing.

SANDERSON: *I noticed in reading all the issues over again that you sort of seemed to slide into Scott and Jean accepting each other as being boyfriend and*

Warren introduces his girlfriend Candy Sothern. [*X-Men* #32: Thomas-Roth-Tartaglione]

JUST THEN...
HEADS UP, GROUP! WARRY'S HERE!
AND, LOOK AT THE GAL HE BROUGHT WITH HIM!
HI, AGENTS! GATHER 'ROUND... I WANT YOU TO MEET A VERY GOOD FRIEND OF MINE ...CANDY SOTHERN!
BUT, REMEMBER, ALL YOU JUNIOR BLOOD-HOUNDS...JUST LOOK, DON'T TOUCH!
I'M VERY GLAD TO MEET ALL OF YOU!
THOUGH, WARREN'S TOLD ME SO MUCH ABOUT YOU, I FEEL I ALREADY KNOW YOU!
2

KEEP IT UP, WINGS, AND "SCOTT" IS THE LEAST OF YOUR WORRIES.
Ahem!
X-MEN, MEET CANDY SOUTHERN. SHE AND I ARE WHAT "PEOPLE" MAGAZINE CALL AN ITEM.
HI.

Candy Sothern keeps in tune with the late 1970s. [*X-Men* #132 Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

girlfriend. For a long time they're agonizing over it, and there's never actually any big scene where they say, "I love you." It just sort of happens

THOMAS: I guess it's one of those things—in those early issues Stan would set up the romantic relationships very clearly, usually in the first issue or so, because that was the way things used to be done, as with the Superman-Lois Lane thing and right away you knew this was the girl for the hero. You knew what the relationship was Now gradually Stan and everybody after him, including at DC, began to be much more realistic in those relationships. But originally you knew from the very first issue [for example], that Scott—or "Slim" Summers, as he was called in the first issues—and Jean were going to be romantically involved. Stan would falter occasionally like in that one weird balloon where Professor X suddenly is thinking "I love you passionately" about Jean Grey [#3, p.4, panel 6]. When I asked Stan about that a little later, he said,"I don't know; it just seemed like something that made sense. I tossed it in to complicate things." And the thing is that sometimes these things were best forgotten. But you knew from the beginning that Ben Grimm and Alicia were going to have a relationship for a long time. Nowadays you can't be sure.

SANDERSON: *Some people I've talked to have said they didn't particularly like Marvel Girl; they thought of her as being a wimp.*

THOMAS: Well, all the early Stan Lee women, just about, were wimps. They were designed to be. It was just the way of people who grew up in Stan's generation, and to a large extent mine [perceived them]. It gets [to be] less [of a problem] all the time. The worst, of course, was Invisible Girl and her relationship with Mr. Fantastic, which bordered on something out of *A Doll's House*, without the change-around that came later. Marvel Girl was that way too: she was the only woman in a six-member team, if you count Professor X. She was played up as the girl everyone was trying to impress and Scott was in love with her and so forth. So as a result I don't think Stan ever worked that hard on getting inside that particular individual character. He sort of played it by ear. And I picked up from there, and tried to bring a few more romantic relationships in there with Vera and Candy, and maybe a little more with Jean and Scott. And it just gradually evolved. Of course, a guy like Chris in particular—I credit him with most of this—would come along and play her up.

SANDERSON: *You did seem to strengthen Jean's character somewhat. For example, toward the end you have her facing down Magneto singlehanded [#63].*

THOMAS: What year was that?

SANDERSON: *Oh, that was toward the end of the run—'68, '69*

THOMAS: '68,'69? Might have been then, because I got married to a woman named Jean, I may have been

Bernard the Poet recites his "Amorphous Ode to a Yo-Yo" at Hank and Bobby's favorite hang-out in the mid-1960s [*X-Men* #31 Thomas-Roth-Tartaglione]

MEANWHILE, LEST WE OVERLOOK HANK AND BOBBY, LET'S DROP IN ON GREENWICH VILLAGE'S COFFEE A GO-GO...
LIKE, LIFE IS A YO-YO ...AND MANKIND KEEPS TYING KNOTS IN THE STRING!
GO UP...GO DOWN...THEN CALL IT PROGRESS! FOR HAPPINESS IS A WARM PUPPET!
LISTEN! BERNARD THE POET IS RECITING HIS LATEST MASTER-PIECE!
ISN'T HE MARVY, HANK? HE'S OUR ANSWER TO BOB DYLAN!
WHAT A GROOVY POEM! AND, IT'S IN FREE VERSE!
PERSONALLY I'M EVEN A BIT UNCERTAIN OF THE QUESTION!
IT HADDA BE! NOBODY'D BE NUTTY ENOUGH TO PAY M FOR IT!

AND, INDEED, IT DOES APPEAR AS IF THE MELANCHOLY CYCLOPS IS BEGINNING TO COME OUT OF HIS SELF-IMPOSED SHELL--BUT, THINGS AREN'T NECESSARILY GOING ACCORDING TO SCHEDULE...
SCOTT'S FINALLY STARTING TO ACT AS IF I'M ALIVE--JUST AS I'VE ALWAYS WANTED HIM TO! OR... IS HE ONLY BEING POLITE BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE A DATE?
JEAN SEEMS SO PENSIVE ...SO DISTANT! COULD IT BE THAT SHE'S THINKING OF HER COLLEGE FRIEND, TED ROBERTS?
HAVE I WAITED TOO LONG TO TELL HER... I LOVE HER?

Typical Scott-Jean angst from the mid-1960s. [*X-Men* #32 Thomas-Roth-Tartaglione]

"DON'T WORRY"! AS THOUGH I COULD HELP WORRYING ABOUT THE ONE I LOVE! BUT I CAN NEVER TELL HER! I HAVE NO RIGHT! NOT WHILE I'M THE LEADER OF THE X-MEN, AND CONFINED TO THIS WHEEL-CHAIR!
SCOTT, DON'T LOOK SO GRIM! COME ON, YOU AND I WILL SEARCH FOR THE MUTANT TOGETHER!
WHAT? YOU WANNA GO WITH OL' PRUNE FACE INSTEAD OF LOVEABLE ME?
4

Scenes We Would Like to Forget: Xavier's unrequited love for Jean Grey. [*X-Men* #3: Lee-Kirby-Reinman]

more aware of it at the time [laughter]. I don't know. About that time, too, I had talked Stan into giving them individual costumes, which was another uphill fight. You don't know how many times, starting near the beginning, and then again when Ross Andru came in, I had arguments with Stan to try to get individual costumes with "X" on the belt just as the identifying factor, just to get them away from this Fantastic Four type look.

SANDERSON: *You also seemed to be quite interested at the time in the Beast, in the idea that he had this very sensitive, reserved personality and was using the big words and the jokes as a defense mechanism.*

THOMAS: I think this was something Stan had in mind. I think it just doesn't come out as much in his books. But I don't know whether it was my interpretation, or something Stan mentioned that surprised me because I didn't see it in the books or it was something that kind of occurred to me along the way and it seemed just a natural thing because that's what people often do. It's funny, at one time I figured I'd remember all these things forever, but you really don't [laughter]. They stay in the background and right now I can't even remember if I wrote *The X-Men* once or twice or three times—how many times I was on or off it, even.

SANDERSON: *Twice. [#20-44, 55-66]*

THOMAS: And I have written more *X-Men* than I have the majority of books that I've written in my life.

SANDERSON: *What do you think of your* X-Men *work looking back? What do you like most about it, and what do you like most about the new team?*

THOMAS: Well, looking back, the thing I like the most about the early issues with Werner was the fact that even though there was too much copy— Werner had a tendency to put all five people looking like they were talking in the same panel and then I would have to write something for them so there'd be too much of it—it was good practice. I liked working with Ross [#36-37] because Ross is a favorite artist of mine. He brings a real intelligence to everything he does; it doesn't always show in the final product maybe because his virtues are more subtle. I liked working with Ross probably more than I ever liked working with Neal [*laughter*]. But the thing with Neal of course is that he brought realism to them—a feeling that these are real people with super-powers. I would always be inspired by working with Neal just because of the sheer level of the draftsmanship and the ideas, even for all the things that he did you just knew were wrongheaded and stubborn things, like not paying attention to covers or noncommercial things he'd want to do—to say nothing of the deadline problem, which it's not best to get into—he was just inspiring to work with in spite of everything. Well, maybe not near the end of and especially [with regard] to Tom Palmer who eventually would virtually refuse to work on the *Avengers* material because Neal was always late and Tom wouldn't stay up all night any more making up for it as I was willing to do at the time. But otherwise it was a really good period. I suppose the thing I liked the most among them was probably working with Neal on the handful of issues we did. I remember pages—Neal had this way of doing things. I remember a story [#59], I think I used his title, "Do or Die, Baby!" which I didn't like that much, but he wanted it to be used, so I figured, "What the hell, we'll use it." Neal had said that he liked to

NOT HIGH ENOUGH TO BECOME A RADAR BLIP, BEAST!
NOW, TELL THE OTHERS A BIT MORE ABOUT THIS DR. LYKOS!
NOT MUCH MORE TO ELABORATE, SCOTT!
THE PROFESSOR'S RECORDS ON HIM ARE DECIDEDLY INCOMPLETE!
BUT RIGHT NOW HE'S THE ONLY PHYSICIAN WE DARE TRUST!
AND WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
THAT ALL MUTANTS ARE STILL OUTLAWS?
-UNTIL JUDGE CHALMERS CAN CLEAR US!
MEANWHILE MY BROTHER COULD DIE... STRANGLED BY RED TAPE!
NO NEED TO POINT, FAINT-LESS LEADER!
THIS X-MAN SEES THE POLICE 'COPTER UP AHEAD, AND IS ALREADY COMMENCING EVASIVE ACTION...!
X-MAN! MUTANT! HOMO SUPERIOR! WORDS THAT PALE THE CHEEK OF A DOUBT-PLAGUED HUMANITY, WHICH HAS EVER HATED THE NEW... THE STRANGE... THE DIFFERENT...FEARED IT AS CREATURES HAVE ALWAYS FEARED THOSE WHO MAY ONE DAY REPLACE THEM.
AND, WHO IS TO SAY THAT MANKIND IS WRONG?
WHAT DID THE LAST NEANDERTHAL SAY TO THE FIRST CRO-MAGNON...?

Thomas responds to Adams's challenge. [*X-Men* #60]

leave blank spaces obviously meant for copy, just to challenge me. I had to write about Cro Magnons and Neanderthals at one point [#60] just to fill the space. It took a lot longer to write his stuff

I remember individual things Neal would draw a story with Angel walking into a room very dramatically, slamming back the door and saying something—Neal would have two or three words, "Angel comes in pissed off"—and then you've got to write a whole conversation that rises and falls and has its own rhythms and then the guy storms out [#60]. You want to write something that's more than what you've just seen before. As a result I think that working with Neal, just like working with a handful of other artists like Barry Smith and John Buscema at his best and a few others, is a real inspiration. It's really good because without something like that you just don't metamorphose. I think Chris has benefited from his association with Byrne and maybe vice-versa. Most of the writers benefit from close relations with really good artists, and if the artists are honest and alert about it, they do, too

SANDERSON: *Since this was the first super-hero series you ever wrote regularly, did you feel it was a major influence on the way you learned how to write super-heroes?*

THOMAS: Well, it wasn't as much as it could have been because I'd been writing the *Sgt. Fury* book, which had a lot of similarities, there being seven characters. So I don't really feel there was that much influence. If anything I feel it might have given me some bad habits because, as I said, Werner had this habit of using an awful lot of panels with five little figures in it, each one pointing somewhere [laughter] so he had to be saying something. And in some ways that was a bad habit that became a problem later on when the page size went down, when the original art page size went down, and you couldn't get as much copy on there, and yet the same pictures were there. So I don't really know how much influence there was except that it was a good chance to experiment with balancing the characters around. It was a book that I enjoyed doing, but it was never a book that I really wanted to do, a huge favorite of mine as a fan book. *The X-Men* was probably fairly low down on my list even though I had read every issue, it had not been one of my favorites, and the real thrill to me was getting to take over *The Avengers* a few months later, in particular when John Buscema came in as the artist—even though I like working with Don Heck I'd never heard of Buscema before, but the third story he did for Marvel was an *Avengers*. He came on to do a fill-in issue and somehow didn't leave for a long time, and that was what really metamorphosed me because it was so wonderful to be working with [someone who was] a real draftsman on the one hand and a guy with an immense dramatic flair who had something to offer. It really was inspirational to me. I loved working with him. I enjoyed just about as much working with him on *Sub-Mariner*, because John had more of his own individual style in those days. He hadn't quite become a Kirby clone, which Stan subconsciously wanted to turn him into

SANDERSON: *What do you think of the current series, the New* X-Men*?*

THOMAS: I think it's an excellently written and excellently drawn book; I don't know what I'd feel if I weren't in the field; I think I'd probably really like it. Since I don't read many comics, I don't pay as much attention to it, but it's definitely one of the best books in the field. It's added a lot to the whole idea of super-hero teams. It stands out, I think, a little bit because of the fact that there aren't all that many books that have the right combination of art and writing these days.

Interview with
LEN WEIN

Len Wein has written for virtually all the leading titles at both Marvel and DC, including Batman, Spider-Man, The Fantastic Four, Justice League of America, The Incredible Hulk, Wonder Woman, *and* Thor. *He has also contributed scripts to such series as* The Phantom Stranger, The Defenders, Werewolf by Night, Dead man, *and* Bat Lash, *and many still consider his finest work to be his collaboration with artist Berni Wrightson on* Swamp Thing.. *Along with Marv Wolfman he wrote the* Spider-Man *prose novel* Murder in Manhattan *and co-plotted and packaged the rest of the Marvel novel series for Pocket Books Wein served a stint as editor-in-chief of Marvel's four-color comics and remained as writer-editor at Marvel until he returned to DC, where he is now an editor. One of the series he edits is the highly popular* The New Teen Titans, *which he helped to create*

Wein and artist Dave Cockrum collaborated on the creation of the "new" X-Men team in 1975. Storm, Colossus, and Nightcrawler made their first appearances in Giant Size X Men *#1, which Wein wrote Earlier, Wolverine had made his debut in one of Wein's stories for* The Incredible Hulk. *Wein soon left the "new"* X Men *series, plotting only the first two regular issues, 94 and 95, which Chris Claremont then scripted. However, as one of the two originators of the series as we know it today, Wein is clearly a major figure in the history of* The X-Men. *Wein retains a familial connection to the series. his wife Glynis, one of comics' leading colorists, has regularly worked on* The X-Men *over the past few years.*

This interview was conducted in February, 1981, transcribed by Gary Groth, and was edited by Len Wein and myself

– P S

SANDERSON: *How did the decision come about to revive the X-Men?*

WEIN: Actually, it had been on the drawing boards for a couple of years. Back before I even started working for Marvel, when Mike Friedrich was working there, he and Roy [Thomas] had talked about reviving the X-Men, after they had been in reprints for a couple of years It was Roy's idea, I think, to make them an international group of characters, and we seemed to have a hole in the schedule at one point, we created a couple of other books at the same time, and *The X-Men* seemed to be one of the books we felt we'd try out, so we decided to revive it. By the time that came into being, Mike was no longer really working at Marvel, and [Dave] Cockrum had been discussed as the artist, and we decided to do the book together

SANDERSON: *Originally, it was Friedrich who was supposed to write the book.*

WEIN: Yes.

SANDERSON: *Now, before the new* X-Men *series began, you already created Wolverine. Was that done with the intention of putting him in the book later?*

WEIN: Mm hm. If it came to be. I figured I'd cover myself on the off chance we did do a new book, and we needed other characters. Actually, the name "Wolverine" was Roy's suggestion: he suggested "Do a character called Wolverine," gave him to me to create for the *Hulk*, and most of the rest of the details as to who and what he was were my own. So I decided to make him a teen-age mutant, to be one of the new X-Men if it came to pass.

SANDERSON: *Chris Claremont said in his interview that he thought you intended that Wolverine's claws came out of his gloves and not from his hands*

WEIN: Absolutely.

SANDERSON: *The claws were not part of him.*

WEIN: Nope. He had no adamantine skeleton, he had nothing. He was a mutant only in terms of his ferocity and his animal senses. He was a hunter and a tracker and incredibly resilient He was able to get the stuff kicked out of him by the Hulk and still be able to get back on his feet.

CHAPTER II
"...AND WHEN THERE WAS ONE!"
WESTCHESTER, NEW YORK: THE SCHOOL HAD SEEMED A LATTER-DAY TOWER OF BABEL AT FIRST -- BUT A TELEPATHIC CRASH COURSE IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE HAD CLOSED THE COMMUNICATION GAP IN MERE MINUTES.
NOW PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER SITS, SOMBERLY STUDYING HIS COLORFULLY-COSTUMED HOUSE-GUESTS --
--AND WHATEVER THOUGHTS HE MIGHT HAVE AT THIS POINT ARE HIS ALONE TO KNOW.
IN ALL MY LIFE, SUCH CLOTHING AS THIS I HAVE NEVER SEEN!
THE COSTUME IS BEAUTIFUL, AND THE FIT--PERFECT! BUT HOW DID YOU..?
THE UNIFORMS ARE CONSTRUCTED FROM UNSTABLE MOLECULES, WHICH ADJUST THEMSELVES WHERE NECESSARY.
I OBTAINED THEM FROM A MAN NAMED REED RICHARDS, AND I'M CERTAIN YOU'LL LEARN MORE OF HIM AND HIS FRIENDS LATER.
BUT RIGHT NOW..

The first gathering of the new X-Men in *Giant Size X Men* #1. Foreground, left to right: Colossus, Storm, Thunderbird, and Nightcrawler. On staircase, left to right: Banshee, Sunfire (who left the group in #94), and Wolverine. [Wein-Cockrum]

SANDERSON: *So he was like a more savage variation of the original version of the Beast?*
WEIN: Yes

SANDERSON: *How did you conceive Wolverine's personality?*
WEIN: Exactly like the personality of a wolverine. Snapping, nasty, aggressive, not a nice person. Heroic, because that's his bent, that's what he's after, but not a nice guy. He's tough and nasty, savage, and a fighter.
SANDERSON: *How savage? Would he have gone to, say, the psychotic lengths that he has under Claremont and [John] Byrne?*
WEIN: No. I don't like writing characters who are quite that psychopathic. He has to fight to control himself, but what would make him a hero in my vision of him was that he would be able to overcome his natural instincts to slit your throat. That was what really would make him a hero, not his abilities to beat you up.
SANDERSON: *Ah, but he would have those instincts.*
WEIN: Yeah, the instincts were there, but he would be more in control of them than I think Chris and John made him.
SANDERSON: *And would he enjoy fighting?*
WEIN: Oh, absolutely. The fighting was what he lived for. But he would never have gone on to the Savage Land, as he did, and offend that hapless guard, who really didn't do anything more than do his job, standing around there.

SANDERSON: *Okay. Now when you say animal senses, do you mean his sense of smell and good eyesight and hearing?.*

OKAY, MUTIE, NOW CLIMB BACK INTO YOUR CAGE... NICE AND SLOW... UNLESS YOU WANT SOME OF THE SAME
SUCKER, YOU JUST MADE THE BIGGEST MISTAKE OF YOUR LIFE
AND THE LAST.
SNIKT!

Wolverine about to have fun. Notice the claws emerge directly from the hands. [*X-Men* #131. Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

WEIN: Exactly. Once he got onto the track he wouldn't get off until he'd found what he was after. And he'd have night vision. Things like that.

SANDERSON: *Why was it decided to only keep one of the old X-Men, Cyclops?*

WEIN: Actually, the decision to keep even Cyclops was ours. We just wanted to tie the new series to the past, something to make it recognizable as the X-Men. Cyclops was the only great character among the old X-Men because of the eyeblasts, and the sense of tragedy about the character. And Dave had this new visor in mind he wanted to use, and I really liked it, and that was almost why we kept him: the new visor because it looked so good. Great-looking character. Very simple costume, but with that visor, very effective.

SANDERSON: *Was it felt that* The X-Men *could not be successfully revived if you kept the old cast together?*

WEIN: Yeah. It had been cancelled with the old cast initially, and it wasn't selling very well even when it was being done by Roy [Thomas] and Neal Adams and Tom Palmer. If that group of talent couldn't make that group of characters sell. Roy's idea was that if we revived them we'd be doing them a la Blackhawks, with an international cast of characters.

SANDERSON: *Now, in the first regular new issue [#94], you had the old X-Men just pack up and leave very suddenly. Are you altogether happy now with the way that was done? Do you feel it was done too quickly?*

WEIN: Not at all. We never meant them to hang on. I wanted to leave readers of the first issue—the Giant-Size—with the feeling of, "Oh God, what's going to happen next? Who's going to be a member of the X-Men?" Because we had about thirteen characters at that point. But I knew immediately that the old X-Men would be written out with the next issue, and we would settle in with the new group of characters that we had.

SANDERSON: *I was just wondering, in terms of their motivations for leaving.*

WEIN: I don't remember exactly what Chris said, but they were meant to leave, obviously, because when Chris was handed the penciled pages, it had already been plotted by me and worked out with Dave. In fact, those two issues were initially the next Giant-Size issue. The book was going to be *Giant-Size X-Men* and when we decided to go to a regular quarter-size book, we took that Giant Size story and split it into two regular issues, with a new splash and a couple of extra pages in it.

SANDERSON: *Having written out the four old X-Men, do you feel there would have been any loss in the book in terms of romantic interest, since you had broken off the relationship between Scott and Jean?*

WEIN: Well, I had no intention of it being any more permanent than Chris made it. Chris was following a little bit of my scenario in the early issues. She was meant to come back in just a few months. The two of them couldn't stay apart and she was going to show up again.

SANDERSON: *As a member of the team?*

... FOR THE MANSION IS QUIET, 'TIL MORNING.
WHEN OLD FRIENDS GATHER TO SAY GOOD-BYE
SCOTT, YOU'RE STILL WEARING YOUR COSTUME...
YEAH.
JEAN, I'VE THOUGHT THIS OVER ALL NIGHT, AND... I'VE DECIDED TO STAY.
I THOUGHT YOU WOULD... BUT, I'D HOPED...
I'M AN X-MAN, PURE AND SIMPLE. THIS IS MY HOME. MY LIFE. THIS IS WHERE I... BELONG.
WHERE YOU BELONG, SCOTT. BUT NOT ME. NOT ANYMORE!
I KNOW A LOUSY SITUATION, ISN'T IT? I... I DON'T WANT TO LOSE YOU, JEAN. I CAN'T.
I LOVE YOU.
AND I LOVE YOU.
THEN, SHE IS GONE.
AND THE MAN CALLED CYCLOPS IS ALONE

The old X-Men leave, including Jean Grey, in the first regular issue of the "new" series. [*X-Men* #94· Wein(plot)-Claremont(script)-Cockrum-McLeod]

WEIN: Yes With re-designed powers. We were going to revamp her not quite into what Phoenix became, but make her a different character, because we all thought she was a wimp, that she wasn't worth it We had to pretty much reconstruct Jean Grey as a character.

SANDERSON: *What did you have in mind?*

WEIN: I don't remember. It's been five years, I don't really remember the details

SANDERSON: *Okay. But she would have had a different costume, and stronger powers, but of the same kind she had already.*

WEIN: Yeah, it would all have been telekinetic

SANDERSON: *And the other three old X-Men would just stay away.*

WEIN: Oh, every now and then we'd want to guest star them, but generally they'd be out of the book. We wanted to focus on the new characters.

SANDERSON: *Now you brought in Sunfire for* Giant-Size X-Men *#1. Was there ever any thought that you might keep him in the team?*

WEIN: No. We just wanted him in there because we wanted all the characters that could possibly become members of the group in that first story. I mean, as I said, Thunderbird was meant to die from the very beginning, just to show to the reader, "Well, this is a real group!" Every time a new group is formed, they all live forever, they all go on and on. So maybe this character has outlived his usefulness and should die. These were kids in training. When I created them they were all teen-agers, not the ages that Chris and John have changed them to now, and the fact that they were teen-agers meant that they were learning the job—unlike the FF, who had been doing it for years and they die. You don't win all the time. The problem with Chris, of course, was that for all intents they weren't learning anything. But Thunderbird was put in there as a throwaway, meant to surprise you. He died in the second issue [#95] No intention of bringing him back

SANDERSON: *What did you like in the old* X-Men *series?*

WEIN: Roy's and Neal's run. That's about all. I never liked the book as much otherwise. I always thought it was a third sister to *The FF* and *Avengers*.

SANDERSON: *What did you think made* The X-Men *under Roy and Neal stand out?*

WEIN: Talent. Quality. They did a wonderful job. There are lines of copy from that thing that I remember to this day that were so stunning. The page where the Sentinels all fly into the sun [#59]. The comment in the Sauron story about what the last Cro-Magnon said to the first Neanderthal or vice-versa [#60], which is a line Chris has recently ripped off [#141]. It was a very effective series, well written, well drawn.

SANDERSON: *But was there anything that made* The X-Men *different, as a concept, than* The FF *or* The Avengers, *that appealed to you?*

WEIN: The fact that they were teen-agers. The fact that they were all essentially cut from the same cloth, they were all mutants Whereas the Avengers were just other characters thrown together and the FF were a family. The fact that they were students. I disagreed so much with Chris's having aged them the way he has He's got Storm in her late 20s, I think Wolverine's supposed to be in his 50s or something...

SANDERSON: *Sixty*

WEIN: He was 19 when I created him. Storm was 17. The fact that he gave Storm Modesty Blaise's origin is another thing that bothers me tremendously

SANDERSON: *Of course, Banshee is middle-aged.*

WEIN: Actually, I was going to cheat. I acknowledged that he was probably in his late 30s or so, but I had Dave draw him so he looked younger—tried to fudge it as best I could, to make him seem about 29. He was

the old one of the group. I only put him in there because I happen to love writing an Irish accent, so it was as simple as that [*laughter*]

SANDERSON: *Do you think you would have made anything of the age gap between them?*

WEIN: Possibly. Can't say. Some of my plans have been forgotten since it became such a radically different book. But Colossus, for example, was meant to be the star of the book. That's why he was the big figure in the first half-dozen covers; he was going to be their Thing, their Hulk, their permanent member. That's why his costume is red, yellow, and blue. Primary colors.

SANDERSON: *How do you conceive of his character then?*

WEIN: He was a peasant. He was a very simple man. It made for a very nice character. He was a nice, simple peasant. He accepted what he was the way everyone in his collective did: they all said, "Yes, you're different than us, but you're a good person, you can become a metal person, we can live with that." Because they're all peasants and simple farmers. When Chris gave him a cosmonaut brother, I wanted to *strangle* him. Suddenly he was not ordinary any more, and what made him work was that he was ordinary, despite his powers. If his brother's a cosmonaut, then the KGB had to be checking out that family, there's no way he could have been living simply in the collective. I had him out in Siberia almost on purpose. No one ever noticed him The townspeople didn't bother, he was good to them, and they all lived out there. The government didn't even know he existed. But a cosmonaut brother, thew can't possibly not know he existed. He really turned everything around by doing that. That's the problem Writers can have a great idea for a story without thinking of all the ramifications.

SANDERSON: *Chris has also said several times that he sees Colossus as a man of the earth, a peasant. Do you see any differences between his treatment and the way you would have treated him?*

WEIN: I would have played him up more. I think he tends to let Colossus stand on the sidelines; he focuses on Wolverine and Storm, the characters he's most interested in, and lets the others flow around. so he hasn't really treated Colossus that much. I'm not sure what I would have done, but I think I would have paid more attention to the character than Chris has been doing

SANDERSON: *As a "simple peasant," would Colossus have had trouble adjusting to life in America?*

WEIN: Exactly. This whole way of life is so alien to him.

SANDERSON: *Well, that also would affect Storm, I would think, since you wanted to have her living with an African tribe all her life until Xavier came along.*

WEIN: Yes, she had been born and bred out there. To them, she had been a goddess her entire life She wasn't sophisticated, she wasn't an American out there. By making her an American you cancel part of the international part of the group. She was African. Where she lived was where she had lived her whole life. She had the powers, immediately upon expressing them as a child they assumed her to be a goddess, and they treated her that way And she grew up that way: they would leave fruits and flowers at her temples and she'd eat and have a good time It was a good relationship and she enjoyed it.

SANDERSON: *And when she came to America she would suffer culture shock all over the place.*

WEIN: Exactly. None of which she did.

SANDERSON: *Why did she and Colossus come to the X-men, do you suppose?*

WEIN: Sense of obligation. Sense of duty. The whole routines I did with Professor X and them, going "Yes, I'll stay here." And they came to a sense that "maybe he's right, we owe it to ourselves and to the world to find out if he's right, to go out there and see if it's better for us to give up everything we know so that the world's a better place. And who knows, they may have discovered that it was wrong and wanted to quit. I probably would have done stories along the way where they decided what they'd rather do is go back to their old life.

SANDERSON: *How was Colossus created?*

WEIN: Actually, the initial inception of the character was done as a character for the Legion of Super-Heroes, when Dave was doing that book. He never had a chance to use him. We were at a party at Marv Wolfman's house years ago and we were standing out on the balcony talking about characters, and he had wanted to make some changes in the Legion while he was drawing it, and he came up with this idea of doing a Russian character. We talked about possibilities, and he described the power and Colossus was the name I suggested to him at the time. Russian Colossus, and all that. He was going to use it there and never got a chance to, so we decided, "Well, we've created a character, might as well use him elsewhere." So we put him into *The X-Men*.

SANDERSON: *How about Storm?*

WEIN: Storm is the strangest character of the group. Storm was first conceived as a character called the Black Cat, with an entirely different set of powers. Roy, I think nixed the Black Cat—she'd have a little black cat cut out of her costume, entirely different costume—since he had come up with another cat of some sort—I don't remember, maybe Hellcat—and not wanting duplications of powers.

SANDERSON: *Black Cat was, of course, a name*

The death of Thunderbird atop Nefaria's fleeing aircraft [*X-Men* #95 Wein(plot)-Claremont(script)-Cockrum-McLeod]

that implied she should be black.

WEIN: Right, and it was also a little ethnic and all this. I had another character in the group, a male called either Tempest or Typhoon—I think Typhoon was his name—who was going to be a member of the group, and we decided that rather than have all these members, we would simply combine the essential visual of the Black Cat—because the face was essentially the same, with that kind of cat's eyes—with the powers of Typhoon, and we created Storm. She was called Typhoon originally, and none of us liked it. It didn't sound feminine enough, it sounded like something you spat rather than said, and we talked to Roy about it as he was going out the door: "Well, she's a mistress of the storm, she's got all these powers, what do we call her?" And he said, "Why don't you simply call her 'Storm'?" And we all went, "Jesus, Johnny Storm..." and he went, "So what?" and we said, "Okay, you're the boss," and we called her Storm [laughter]

SANDERSON: *There was a character called Tempest later on in the new Doom Patrol...*

WEIN: Yes. different character entirely. Bore no resemblance and was not from the same source

SANDERSON: *How about Nightcrawler?*

WEIN: Nightcrawler's costume when we first presented it was a lot more complex. We simplified the costume. There were more sections to it in terms of colors and things. Nightcrawler was just a visual presented to me by Dave. For years now Dave has created characters in this book that he keeps, a big bound volume. What essentially we did was we sat down with this book and went through looking for visuals for the new members for the group. And Nightcrawler had a different name. But that visual was so damned impressive, so we said "Fine," he adjusted the costume and came up with the teleportation powers.

SANDERSON: *Now, he was supposed to be a dark, brooding sort of character*

WEIN: Yes, exactly. It was someone who decided it was his time to go out and meet the world, which is exactly why Xavier got the other two, Colossus and Storm, because they wanted to go out and find out what the world was like. He'd been in the circus his entire life, and his first foray into the real world had him being chased by a mob. Chris did an annual a year or two ago [1980] in which Nightcrawler was adopted by a sorceress and had a brother and all this, which bore no resemblance to the original conception. In fact, if you read that annual and you read *Giant-Size X-Men* #1, they contradict one another. He was meant just to be that kind of character, who was the group's Spock in many ways

SANDERSON: *Emotionless?*

WEIN: Not emotionless, but detached... learning... cautious.

SANDERSON: *I've gotten the impression from what I've heard that he was going to be someone who was very much isolated, unhappy, and gloomy...*

WEIN: Initially. We would deal with that. Nobody, certainly, had we stayed with the book for a long period of time, would have developed as they did. He would have developed in a different direction. I would never have given him the image-inducer. I think it was one of my original orders as an editor to get rid of the thing, because so what? You've got a character who, if he could look like anybody else, denied what he was all about. He should have to wear the trenchcoat and slouch hat and his hands in his pockets and his tail tucked into his pants so people wouldn't climb the walls as he walked past them

SANDERSON: *Would Storm's personality have been*

much different from the way it evolved?
WEIN: Not terribly, except for the origin, and nuances, things like the claustrophobia. She would have been much the character—majestic. She's a very noble figure, and Chris has written it the same way.
SANDERSON: *Did you feel that you were going to pretty much stick with this team for the foreseeable future or did you think of bringing other characters in...?*
WEIN: Oh, I had others in mind to bring in. I don't remember now, but I was going to do some juggling. The trick with the book is almost what we're trying in a fashion with *The New Teen Titans*, which is that you don't know what the hell's going on, I didn't want it to become predictable. It's why I killed Thunderbird, it's why I was going to bring characters in and out of the book, to keep you on your toes
SANDERSON: *Since it was conceived as an international book, do you think you would have had them going off to different countries all the time?*
WEIN: Oh, yeah. I had ways worked out. Chris did other things. Professor X taught them all English mentally, so it solved the problems of the language barrier. But he was also going to use his powers to erase knowledge of them from the rest of the world, any record of Colossus and Nightcrawler· the people in charge of those records would wander into the room one day and put them in the paper shredder and burn away the files and never notice they weren't there anymore. I was going to have Professor X solve the problems of this international group by eliminating evidence. And then eventually someone was going to stumble over something and go. There was going to be a big conflict. He'd erased the evidence of their existence from the rest of the world, and other people would discover that these characters had been elsewhere first.
SANDERSON: *What do you think of the series as it evolved after you left?*
WEIN: I enjoy reading it. I enjoyed reading it a lot. I thought the stuff Dave did is very good certainly, I thought the stuff that John and Terry [Austin] did was wonderful. I like Chris's writing overall. The problem I find with it is this: somebody else up here sat down and decided to read like eighteen months' worth of *X-Men* back-to-back, not having read them in a while, and discovered that if you read it as a whole, it's incomprehensible. Every issue reads fine by itself, but things contradict themselves on an issue-to-issue basis, and it's not coherent as a whole. There are big gaps in the logic and structure; things are begun and never get resolved; they get forgotten and skittered away into the side. But I find the same problem as a creative editor at Marvel or DC. Chris as a writer has one major problem and this is nothing new, I've told this to Chris repeatedly. He suffers from Gee-what-a-neat-bit-ism. He'll just do it because it seems so great at the time. There are issues of *X-Men* that although wonderfully written aren't stories at all, but just great bits strung together for 17 pages or 22 pages, and that's the major problem I see with him
SANDERSON: *It has often been alleged that* The New Teen Titans, *which you edit and helped create, is highly influenced by the new* X-Men *series. What do you think of this criticism?*
WEIN: I think everyone who sees that takes it on as a surface thing simply because they're both called "the new." The reason I called *The New Teen Titans* "*The New Teen Titans*" had nothing to do with the new X-Men; it had to do with the old Teen Titans. I wanted it to be very obvious and very blatant that these ain't the old Teen Titans; it's a different book, because there's such a stigma of "blechh" comic attached to the old *Teen Titans* book. I wanted people to know it was a brand new book. We always liked the Teen Titans, Marv and myself.
SANDERSON: *Now, the very name* Teen Titans, *indicates that these heroes are teen-agers Is there something special about doing a group of super-heroes who are adolescents?"*
WEIN: Yeah. There's always the learning process Either they're too damn cocksure of themselves or not cocksure enough. There's always the education. There's the inherent ability of the characters to grow because they're teen-agers. They're bound to grow. And there's a lot to work with in that.
SANDERSON: *And do you feel perhaps it's easier for readers—maybe even yourself—to identify with the characters since they can make mistakes?*
WEIN: Not necessarily I think that a good character at any level can be identifiable by virtue of how well-rounded his characterization is.
SANDERSON: *Do you ever have any regrets that you only got to write one issue of* The X-Men *and plot two more?*
WEIN: Oh, yeah. Seeing the way the strip developed and the artist who worked on it and everything else. There are very few strips that I regret giving up in my career and that's one of them. I'm really sorry I didn't stick with it. I don't know if it would have become the success it became if I *had* done it; it may not have been
SANDERSON: *Why did you have to leave it?*
WEIN: I was the Editor-in-Chief of Marvel and I was putting in 25-hour days. I wil personally testify to the fact that the last twelve pages of the first Giant-Size were written at my desk in my office as an all-nighter, and that's crazy. I couldn't put in those kind of hours. My brain was falling out [laughter].

Interview with

DAVE COCKRUM

Before The X-Men *Dave Cockrum was best known for his work on another cult super-hero "group" series, DC's* Legion of Super-Heroes. *At Marvel Cockrum and Len Wein together created the "new" X-Men series and its members: Colossus, Nightcrawler, Storm, and the short-lived Thunderbird. Later, Cockrum and Chris Claremont devised the Phoenix identity for Jean Grey, the Marvel Girl of the original X-Men, and brought her back into the new series Cockrum is also responsible for the creation of the Star jammers, the team of galactic adventurers introduced in issue 107*

Cockrum penciled the "new" X-Men *series from its beginning in* Giant-Size X-Men *1 through issue 107. At that point the bi-monthly series became a monthly, and Cockrum turned over his role of penciller to John Byrne. However, When Byrne departed for* The Fantastic Four *after issue 143, Cockrum was ready to take on* The X-Men *once more, and has been the series' regular artist from issue 145 through the present.*

Cockrum has also served as Marvel's assistant art director, and has worked on series as disparate at Ms Marvel *and* Captain Marvel, Jr.

This interview was conducted in March, 1981 It was transcribed by Gary Groth and was edited by myself and approved by Cockrum.

—P S

SANDERSON: *How did you become involved with creating the new X-Men?*

COCKRUM: Well, I guess Roy [Thomas] had the idea first. I was hanging around Marvel in those days looking for something to do, and one day I had a few minutes alone with Roy—surprise, surprise—when he wasn't doing anything and we started to kick around the idea of the X-Men and he had said that he had always wanted to start a new group and sort of treat them like mutant Blackhawks, an international group. I think they would be based on the island that Magneto used to have that was invisible to tracking devices and radar and which you couldn't see. Magneto had it in a Sub-Mariner crossover [*X-Men* #6] and we had talked about the possibility of the X-Men appropriating that island and operating out of there.

SANDERSON: *Just like Blackhawk Island?*

COCKRUM: Yeah.

SANDERSON: *They wouldn't have planes, would they?*

COCKRUM: No. Well, maybe they'd have one. Well, you know, like the Blackbird, but it wouldn't be like "Hawkaaaaa". But I told Roy I'd be interested in doing something like that and so he said "All right, I'll consider you." Then he couldn't write it himself so he first asked Mike Friedrich. This was a long time before this actually got off the ground, I think actually about a year maybe—eight months, ten months, or a year. But Roy couldn't devote any attention to it and the whole thing kinda got shelved, but I had drawn up a whole bunch of characters. Time passed and Roy decided that now was the time to do something with this. He approached me again, Mike Friedrich was no longer available so Roy asked Len [Wein] if he wanted to handle it.

SANDERSON: *Do you remember what year it was when he talked to you about doing* The X-Men?

COCKRUM: Well, all I can remember is the cover date of *Giant-Size* Number One was 1976, so I figure it

CLOSE, WOLVERINE... BUT NOT QUITE...
Del FLORIA'S
COULDN'T RISK TELEPORTING TO JEAN'S ROOF--
-- I DIDN'T GET A GOOD LOOK AT IT WHEN I FELL, AND I CAN'T "PORT UNLESS I KNOW EXACTLY WHERE I'M GOING. BUT THIS WAY'S JUST AS GOOD--!

Nightcrawler does his stuff. [*X-Men* #105: Claremont-Cockrum-Layton]

was 1974, possibly late 1973. Most likely '74.

SANDERSON: *And '75 would be when the book actually got started?*

COCKRUM: Well, actually possibly late '74 because it took me an awful long time to produce that book. They used to joke that the only reason that it said 1975 was because they weren't sure, during that year, I would finish it.

SANDERSON: *Now when Roy first asked you to do the book, you had started to draw up a bunch of characters. Were any of those eventually put in the book?*

COCKRUM: Oh, yeah, most of them. Of course you got Nightcrawler. Nightcrawler was a holdover from my days when I was doing a *Legion of Super-Heroes* for DC Nightcrawler has a curious history. When I was in the navy stationed in Guam, one night in the middle of a god awful typhoon my first wife and I were sitting there being absolutely terrified by the elements, and, what the hell, we couldn't sleep so we sat there and created a superhero. And we decided wouldn't it be fun if he was a demon and he could teleport and run up walls and he howled like an animal...and all kinds of weird stuff. Essentially he was Nightcrawler and later on, while I was still a fan, I put him in as a sidekick to a character I called Intruder who wore a chrome skull and a black costume with chrome gloves and boots. He was a Batman type with a demon sidekick.

SANDERSON: *Was Nightcrawler called Nightcrawler then?*

COCKRUM: Yeah, and my story line at the time was that he was a legitimate honest-to-God demon He had screwed up somehow or other and rather than go back and face punishment, he decided to stay up here and help the good, the other side. I dropped the whole demon shtick when {Jack} Kirby came out with his Demon. It seemed kind of superfluous then. When I became a pro and I was doing *Legion of Super-Heroes* I proposed four new legionnaires and Nightcrawler was one of them. But Murray Boltinoff's response was that he was too weird looking

SANDERSON: *And we can't have weird looking people in this book about aliens.*

COCKRUM: That's right, and the only one of the four that they used was the one I originally named Starfire but who wound up being called Wildfire after being named Erg-1 for a while. But I also had a guy who was a weather handler called Typhoon who had a flowing cape with a dark cape with yellow trim. And I had a girl who had wings but not out of her back. they were from her arms like bird's. She was green and her name was Quetzal and she had long flowing hair. If you put Quetzal and Typhoon together you got kind of a strange version of Storm

SANDERSON: *Len told me that Storm was an amalgam of Typhoon and Black Cat.*

COCKRUM: Yeah, that was afterwards. When I did up the original X Men designs, one of the characters was called the Black Cat. Take a look at Storm without the white hair and without the cape, and that's essentially the Black Cat. She had dark hair which was sort of like Wolverine's, tufted on top with the ear effect. And she could transform either into a cat—I preferred the idea of a house-cat and I think we were talking about both a house-cat and a panther—and she could also half-transform into a humanoid cat.

SANDERSON: *And, of course, she's named after the character from the '40s*

COCKRUM: Yeah. She was a very striking-looking character. This was before the project got shelved. It got shelved, time passed, and in the interim there must have been two dozen female cat characters. You had Tigra and the Cat. It seemed kind of stupid to go on and do another cat character what with all the other

UH, AMANDA-- I THINK WE'RE BEING FOLLOWED.
BETSY DEAR DO YOU HEAR ME SCREAMING FOR A COP?
AUF WIEDERSEHEN, MEINE FREUNDE... IF YOU DON'T HEAR FROM US AGAIN...
...DON'T WORRY. MERRY CHRISTMAS, ALL.

Peter Rasputin and Kurt Wagner (using the "image inducer" to alter his appearance) first meet their future girlfriends Betsy and Amanda. [*X-Men* #98: Claremont-Cockrum-Grainger]

ones running around, and so we dropped the whole shtick. We were hassling and arguing and trying to figure out how we could work her in, and we had already planned to use Typhoon from the Legion of Super-Heroes. But we couldn't figure out what to do with the black girl, we really liked her, we wanted to use her, and Roy just threw out, "Why don't you make her Typhoon?" And everybody's mouths were hanging open. I ran out of the room and drew her with long white hair and a cape on, and came back in and that was it. Everybody said, "Yeah! Yeah!" and her working name was Typhoon for awhile.

SANDERSON: *Which doesn't sound very feminine*

COCKRUM: Yeah, that was the point. We started saying, "How about Storm, isn't that more feminine?" and everybody liked it better, so that's what we settled on.

SANDERSON: *Len claims that Roy's the one who came up with the name Storm.*

COCKRUM: Not the name. He suggested Typhoon should be the black girl rather than the guy.

SANDERSON: *Let's see. At this point, Len was going over the heroes with you and making selections from the ones you worked out. When you created Nightcrawler way back when, in his demon stage, did he have anything like the personality he has today?*

COCKRUM: He was very malevolent.

SANDERSON: *Much more like Kirby's Demon?*

COCKRUM: Oh, he was a nasty son of a bitch The only thing that made him any kind of good guy at all was just that he chose to help the good guys. He was worse than Wolverine ever was. Personally, I now prefer him the way he is, the swashbuckler, because he reflects the side of me that—well, Nightcrawler is my alter-ego. But when we first started using him. I think we intended to go with that dark, malevolent side.

SANDERSON: *Len keeps saying that he wanted Nightcrawler to be this brooding figure, always morose about how he looks so different from normal humans*

COCKRUM: Every goddamn Marvel weird-looking person does that, so why not have one who doesn't?

SANDERSON: *Why did you decide against keeping him malevolent? Because you had competition from Wolverine?*

COCKRUM: Well, we had Wolverine, who was at that time an ultra-psycho malevolent weirdo, and we had Thunderbird, who was an obnoxious loudmouth. So, we would really have the group overloaded with unlikable people.

SANDERSON: *In the days when Thunderbird was still around, Wolverine wasn't an outright psycho yet But, he was still mean.*

COCKRUM: Well...When Professor X got him away from the Canadians, he wasn't beyond offering to shove his claw up the Canadian general's nose, and things like that. He was no pussycat.

SANDERSON: *So, how did the idea come along to change Nightcrawler into the swashbuckling-jokester-circus performer-old movie buff-man about town?*

COCKRUM: I think it was just because he was my favorite character, and he started reflecting my attitudes and I'm a frustrated swashbuckler and I'm a movie buff. So, it just came about naturally.

SANDERSON: *Early on in* The X-Men, *Nightcrawler used this image-inducer to change his appearance. And that disappeared. Why was it decided to do away with it?*

COCKRUM: For a number of reasons. For one thing, there were a lot of readers out there who actually thought it was something he could do, not a gizmo he carried, but a super-power. It wasn't something he could do and we were trying to point that out. Also, I guess we just sort of went for a blue-is-beautiful-and-to-hell-with-you-guys attitude. Chris, [Claremont] I noticed later on, had him thinking, "Gee, the professor was mad at me when he came back from space and found out I wasn't using the image-inducer any more." The Professor wants to maintain the secrecy of the group, and Kurt doesn't give a damn. It's kind of fun, but the Professor's too stuffy anyhow, and we enjoy popping his balloon once in a while. [*laughter*]

SANDERSON: *Yes, Wolverine calling him Charlie and Chuck*

COCKRUM: We're doing a new thing, now, with Kitty and the Professor. Kitty hates the training uniform. The way Professor X looks at it, "That's my school uniform!

ANYONE EVER TELL YOU YOU'VE GOT ONE HECK-UVA CHIP ON YOUR SHOULDER, OL' BUDDY?
NOT T' MY FACE. NOT TWICE.
YOU CAN'T BE A LONER ALL YOUR LIFE, WOLVIE.
I LIKED BEIN' A LONER, JEANNIE. NO HASSLES, NO COMPLICATIONS, NO... GRIEF.
I LIVED MY WHOLE LIFE NOT KNOWIN' WHAT LOVE IS--AN' NOT CARIN', EITHER.
TILL I MET YOU.
Wolverine on his feelings toward Jean [*X-Men* #110· Claremont-deZuniga]

I designed that uniform! You will wear that uniform!" We're already working on one story where she comes in and says, "How do you like my new uniform," and he's mad at her because she's just blown all his computers he's working on by phasing through them, so he doesn't even look. But, she's wearing a roller-disco outfit that's the most garish, horrible thing you've ever seen in your life. It's really revolting. And, she'll stow away and go on an X-Men mission, wearing this stupid costume, and it's going to cause more aggravation. I think over the long run we're going to play with ideas like, she's going to come in and say, "Well, look, Professor, I've had an accident, ripped my costume to shreds," and he's going to say, "Kitty, it's virtually impossible to accidentally destroy a costume made of unstable molecules."

SANDERSON: *Whatever that means.*

COCKRUM: Well, you know, the legendary unstable molecules. Anyhow, you can do it on purpose, but it's hard to do it by accident

SANDERSON: *Are you planning eventually to give her a new costume, or are you going to play with this shtick as long as possible?*

COCKRUM: She'll get one sooner or later—I'm not sure how soon—but we're going to milk it for everything we can

SANDERSON: *Back to Storm. Did she, when you were thinking of playing with Black Cat, have a personality similar to what it became, that of a goddess?*

COCKRUM: No. I don't think so I don't believe we actually went into any personality on her, but I suspect she would have been a more volatile character as a cat, cats being calculating and nasty when roused. You've got another Wolverine coming up there, sort of. Gee, we could've done an all-animals comic.

SANDERSON: *How about Wolverine? Did you have anything to do with his creation?*

COCKRUM: No, but I resented his existence for a long time because I had come up with a Wolverine and shown it to Roy before this Wolverine. I had a series of characters I suggested could be X-Men...How should I put this? I did a montage piece of art with a lot of brand-new characters on it, none of whom was really identified as anything. One of them wound up later being used as Tyr in the *Legion of Super-Heroes*, the guy with the gun on his hand. But anyhow, two of them were a brother and sister. She was a vampire who, by one method or another, was going to try to keep it under control, possibly just bite people once and leave them alone, and not kill them off. He was a vulpine type; animalistic, bestial, feral, whom I called Wolverine.

SANDERSON: *Complete with claws?*

COCKRUM: No, he didn't have claws. But he had fangs and he was a nasty son of a bitch. He had almost the same haircut that Wolverine has now. In the interim, somewhere along the line, Roy suggested to Len, "How about a Canadian mutant called Wolverine?" I assumed Roy just forgot that I showed him my Wolverine. I was kind of miffed about the whole thing, but it seemed kind of pointless to carry it on. I never did like Wolverine for a long time...

SANDERSON: *Why is that? Because you seem to like characters who do have this sort of nasty streak in them?*

COCKRUM: Well, no. I suppose I didn't really understand Wolverine, but I didn't like him at all. I came to like him during the later stuff with Chris and [John] Byrne. I kind of liked the way they developed him, and I don't like the way the powers-that-be at Marvel keep meddling and making them occasionally make him do stuff that's inconsistent with what he's been doing up to that point.

SANDERSON: *For example, the second Doom issue [#146] where he starts talking about how he fears going into berserker rages and he doesn't like them.*

COCKRUM: Yeah...[laughter] That's a good example. I think he likes them, actually.

SANDERSON: *Well, that's what he said way back when in one of your issues.*

COCKRUM: Yeah. Another good example is when he attacked Nightcrawler for kissing Mariko under the mistletoe [#143]. C'mon, he knows these people are friends; he's not going to do that. I mean, that was no menace. That was apparently done on [Jim] Shooter's orders: make Wolverine do something crazy. Personally, I think that was a bad choice. That's all inconsistent with what they've done with him. I don't like the inconsistencies, but I do like the basic character now.

SANDERSON: *Well, what struck you badly about Wolverine to begin with, and what was it that changed your mind?*

COCKRUM: Well, he had no dimensions; he was just a lunatic. And what can you do with a lunatic? I mean, I felt, I guess, the way Angel felt in 148. Angel and Professor have one hell of an argument over Wolverine. Angel says, "This guy's a wacko, and I don't want to be any part of any group that's got this wacko in it because he's going either by accident or on purpose carve one of you guys up one of these days and it might be me," and Angel leaves. That's the end of Angel as an X-Man, at least for the time being. But, that was kind of my attitude: this guy is a weirdo and he's crazy and he's going to cut somebody up. It was like pornography. There was no redeeming social value. But he's got a bit of dimension to him now, and I like the dimension. There's less of the crazy and more of the man inside who had to be there, but I didn't know who he was when I was first doing it.

SANDERSON: *So, you like the humanizing elements, the fact that he's become friendly with the X-Men, the fact that he can feel love for various people.*

COCKRUM: Mm-hm. Of course, we tried to start that with what he felt for Jean Grey, but I sort of looked at it as more like the guy with the big telescope a half a mile away and what he feels about the girl taking the shower in the skyscraper over there. He considers going over and introducing himself when you know it wouldn't be fun.

SANDERSON: *Are you saying, then, that his attraction to her was just physical or did it go deeper than that, do you think? He seemed to be very broken up by her apparent demise*

COCKRUM: Oh, I think he became genuinely fond of her afterwards, but at first there, I think it was just a...you know, an animal passion [*laughter*] and besides which it would be fun to shove it up Scott's nose.

SANDERSON: *John [Byrne] thinks that Wolverine was attracted to elements in her personality that he saw as being like his own.*

COCKRUM: That's possible. She certainly became like that when Phoenix was fully in charge

SANDERSON: *Do you think Wolverine's romantic interest in Mariko is stronger or more real than it was for Jean? And will Mariko stay around, do you think, now that John's departed?*

COCKRUM: I think she probably will. Not in the form that Chris suggested, though. He suggested she become the housekeeper. I said, "Chris! she's got housekeepers! She wouldn't become one!" But, anyway, I think Wolverine's drawn to the gentleness in her. It calms him, and it's probably a good influence. I think she'll be around off and on for some time, I suppose, unless unforeseen events happen. Who knows?

Wolverine's fascination with Mariko. [*X-Men* #119. Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

SANDERSON: *Do you agree with John's proposed origin for Wolverine? Do you think you and Chris will hold to it or do you think you'll try to come up with something else?*

COCKRUM: The Sabretooth thing?

SANDERSON: *The Sabretooth thing, how he got the adamantium skeleton, being crippled out in the woods for years, being sixty years old*

COCKRUM: I don't believe *that*! [laughter] I don't know some of the origin. But personally, I don't like the adamantium skeleton at all. I suppose we're stuck with it, though

SANDERSON: *John says it actually is adamantium, Chris says that they have somehow fused adamantium atoms with the calcium atoms in his bones—not quite the same thing, I suppose*

COCKRUM: Well, what I felt was that he had grown an organic structure which was very similar to adamantium in its properties.

SANDERSON: *Just as Colossus doesn't really turn into iron or steel: he turns into a biological substance as hard as iron or steel.*

COCKRUM: Yeah, and the claws were not in there, operated by springs or anything like that. I don't know how far we could go with this explanation in a comic book, but I always saw it as more like an erection, except that it was a voluntary erection and he could go "pinngg!"

SANDERSON: *But it gives him the same sort of emotional release perhaps.*

COCKRUM: Well, I don't think we could go into that very far at all in a comic book

SANDERSON: *Well, we can in an interview.*

COCKRUM: I don't know. I mean, the mechanics of

WHY DEAR COUSIN SEAN, HOW NICE OF YOU TO-- SHALL WE SAY--DROP IN?
IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T GUESSED, MY MUSCULAR FRIEND AND I ARE THE VILLAINS OF THE PIECE I AM BLACK TOM CASSIDY.
AND I, STUDENTS OF CHARLES XAVIER, MY DEARLY HATED STEP BROTHER-- OH YES, WE KNOW WHO YOU ARE X-MEN!--
I AM THE... JUGGER-NAUT!
AND TOGETHER, WE TWO ARE GOING TO DO WHAT NO OTHER VILLAINS IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DO.
WE'RE GOING TO KILL THE X-MEN!

Sinister siblings Banshee's brother, Black Tom, teams up with Xavier's step-brother the Juggernaut. [*X-Men* #101: Claremont-Cockrum-Chiaramonte]

the thing were like that as far as I was concerned. Obviously it's not like that now. As far as his origin goes, originally we had intended to have him be a mutated wolverine and—

SANDERSON: *Like one of the High Evolutionary's New Men*

COCKRUM: Yeah. Yeah

SANDERSON: *Might he have even been developed by the High Evolutionary?*

COCKRUM: Possibly, I don't know Len and I kicked that out, but I don't think we ever developed it very far.

SANDERSON: *Len says that those claws of Wolverine's were not supposed to be part of him, that he thought they were part of the gloves*

COCKRUM: Well, Len created Wolverine; that's probably what he intended.

SANDERSON: *But then there is the scene in which he pops them out of his hands without his glove on for the first time in front of the other X-Men. How did that idea originate?*

COCKRUM: I think that was a case of "Wouldn't that be hysterical if...?" and we did it. [*laughter*]

SANDERSON: *But up till then, you never really thought of it before, whether trey wehe real or not.*

COCKRUM: I don't think so.

SANDERSON: *Now, there was a Black Cat who eventualoy turned up in Spider-Man. Is this based on your Black Cat?*

COCKRUM: No. She doesn't look like her at all, although I did the costume design, but there's no similarity at all.

SANDERSON: *Did Marv [Wolfman] get the idea independently to do a character named after the old Black Cat from the '40s and he just happened to call you in on it?*

COCKRUM: Well, I did a lot of character designs for Marvel when I was on staff there. It wasn't my primary function or anything, but it was something I did a lot because everyone liked what I did. Marv's office was right next door and he came around and said, "Hey, I want to do a Black Cat character, design me one," and that's what I did.

SANDERSON: *How about Colossus? Where did he come from?*

COCKRUM: Kind of sprung fully grown out of my head, I guess. I did the visual Everybody thought this armored guy was great. We had a hassle with the name at first because *It, the Colossus That Walks* was...

SANDERSON: It, the Living Colossus, *you mean*

COCKRUM: Yeah, *It, the Living Colossus*—blahh—was still being published, and Tony Isabella didn't want us to use the name "Colossus" for our character, but fortunately the book got cancelled. Very fortunately. [*laughter*] I think we did less thinking about who he was than anybody else and that's why he's never had much of a personality.

SANDERSON: *Len said that he intended Colossus to be the star of the book.*

COCKRUM: Yeah, he did. He always felt the strong guy, the strong man, was the best character to be the lead character. And that was Len's intent, and I suppose would've happened if Len had stayed on.

SANDERSON: *But you and Chris never had any interest in making him the lead.*

COCKRUM: Not really, no. He makes a good visual, and we went ahead and made him the prominent figure on the covers a lot, but he's been terribly neglected and I think it's about time we did something with him really.

SANDERSON: *How was it decided to make Colossus a Russian?*

COCKRUM: Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time. Everybody was into detente and it was supposed to be an international group and the way I drew it, he looked like a Russian, so why the hell not? That was really all there was to it.

SANDERSON: *There's some suspicion among Le-*

gion fans that Colossus is really a new version of Ferro Lad

COCKRUM: No. No. Certainly not intended. I always wanted to bring Ferro Lad back as a matter of fact, but they wouldn't let me do it. I had a way figured out, but they—the powers that be—mostly Nelson Bridwell—wouldn't let me do it.

SANDERSON: *How about Thunderbird?*

COCKRUM: He was one of the original batch of characters that I had done, and when we got down to looking at him, nobody really much liked the costume and so I did another one, and that's the one we used. I had also come up with a character called Vampyr, who was a bat-guy. Everybody liked him but nobody wanted to use him as a character. And he's never been seen since.

SANDERSON: *Now, was it originally intended that Thunderbird would really be a member of the team? When was it decided to kill him off?*

COCKRUM: Kind of at the last minute. The way this all came about was that when we were first planning out that first issue, we decided what we were going to do was have it be an aptitude test or an entrance exam or something like that. They would be sent off to rescue the original X-Men, but the original X-Men would not actually be in any danger. We figured if it's an entrance exam, theoretically, there are people who are going to flunk as well as people who pass, and so we had Banshee and Sunfire, and we were gonna flunk 'em. Then, we thought, well, that doesn't seem fair, we ought to have a new guy to flunk too, a new guy who's unsuitable. So that was what Thunderbird was for, to be a flunker. He was unsuitable because he was anti-social. Hah! As if Wolverine's not antisocial. But, at the last minute—well, I liked Banshee and we all liked Thunderbird, so we figured to hell with it. It turned out not to be a test anyway. So we had Sunfire, who nobody much liked, go off in a huff, and we kept Banshee and we kept Thunderbird. But then we didn't know what to do with Thunderbird because we never thought him out. It was easier to kill him off than to think him out.

SANDERSON: *Was it thought that he duplicated Wolverine too much?*

COCKRUM: He duplicated both Wolverine...

SANDERSON: *And Colossus, with his super-strength.*

COCKRUM: Almost everybody in the group did something he did, and he seemed kind of superfluous. He was fast, he was strong. I mean, he was fast enough and strong enough to run down a buffalo and pull it down, and faster than Colossus, but not as strong. The whole thing semed pointless, so we did him in.

SANDERSON: *Do you think that it was a good idea to do him in so early? I know that when the story was written, you thought that it was only going to be a quarterly book, but nevertheless, it was only the second story. Len says it was done for shock value.*

COCKRUM: I guess it was more than anything else We couldn't figure out what to do with him, so we figured, all right, let's kill him off. You don't often find a character that's introduced and so abruptly killed off. I imagine it did shock a lot of people. We never intended to bring him back, although we've toyed with the idea of having a younger brother show up wearing the same costume.

SANDERSON: *When Banshee got brought back into the new X-Men, there was a considerable modification in the way he looked from his first appearance.*

COCKRUM: Yeah, well... that started out because it was Len's feeling that Banshee as a heroic character had to stop being funny looking. So, we somewhat gradually, but probably not as gradually as all that, changed him from a caricature Irishman into a nice-looking man. That was the whole point of it. They went back the other way again after I left the book. Byrne didn't like him as a nice-looking hero type and kind of back-slid him a little bit

SANDERSON: *Is Banshee going to be popping up more often now that you're back on the book? I know Chris has been talking aout giving him his powers back.*

COCKRUM: I've been agitating for it, but... I don't know.

SANDERSON: *How about his daughter, Siryn?*

COCKRUM: Again, I don't know. I'd personally rather have Banshee than Siryn, because I'm a Banshee fan. I like him.

SANDERSON: *Is it because Banshee is more established or is it because he's the middle-aged man of the group?*

COCKRUM: I like Banshee, I always have. We talked about getting rid of him once before when I was on the book—I guess it was in #104. I suddenly realized I was doing a panel here and the only normal face in the whole group was Banshee, and it was such a relief to have a normal face to draw that, on the basis of that, I suggested we keep him and not get rid of him after all I've always liked him. He's a comfortable character.

SANDERSON: *In terms of personality, too, I suppose. There's nothing abrasive or neurotic about him.*

COCKRUM: He's a well-rounded and well-adjusted character. He enjoys life, and he's got a castle.[*laughter*]

SANDERSON: *Yes, that's nice.*

COCKRUM: We talked about having his castle be kind of X-Men East. West? No, East.

SANDERSON: *Sounds a bit odd You'd expect that to be Sunfire's mansion.*

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Ororo's origin story. (*X-Men* #102: Claremont-Cockrum-Grainger)

COCKRUM: Yeah.

SANDERSON: *Did you do a lot of research on Ireland before you did the sequence with the castle [#101-103]?*

COCKRUM: Not a lot. I picked up a couple of travel books on Ireland and read through them That was about it.

SANDERSON: *How about the leprechauns? How did they come into the picture?*

COCKRUM: I'm not really sure. [*laughter*] I remember wanting to do a story with mucky, damp, slimy, dungeons and a sloppy, slithering muck monster, bog monster, and maybe even leprechauns, and stuff like that. And somehow we lost most of it.

SANDERSON: *Well, Juggernaut was the monster.*

COCKRUM: Yes, but he wasn't sloppy and slithery. He's just big and probably has bad breath. It kind of lost the direction I was looking for. We had a lot of battles over that story anyway. Because Chris wanted to have them set up a smuggler's den, and it seemed kind of mundane for the X-Men to be combatting smugglers.

SANDERSON: *Or for that matter for the Juggernaut to be into smuggling*

COCKRUM: Yeah, yeah. As a matter of fact, robbing the mint seems a little mundane for the Juggernaut—what he's doing now in *Spider-Woman*.

SANDERSON: *Well, I don't know, I could see Juggernaut breaking into a mint: by sheer force, try to stop me—boom!*

COCKRUM: I doubt he's at all interested in the money.

SANDERSON: *I suppose even he has to eat, needs a place to stay.*

COCKRUM: Sure, anywhere he goes, he eats anything he wants.

SANDERSON: *I suppose. It occurs to me that several of the new X-Men—Banshee, Storm, Nightcrawler, now that he doesn't have the image-inducer, Phoenix when she was around—don't wear masks They seem to share Nightcrawler's lack of interest about the secret identity business. Does this disturb you at all? In the early stories, nobody seemed to know about the X-Men, but now they've made several appearances in public, even at a Washington Congressional committee hearing [#141-142).*

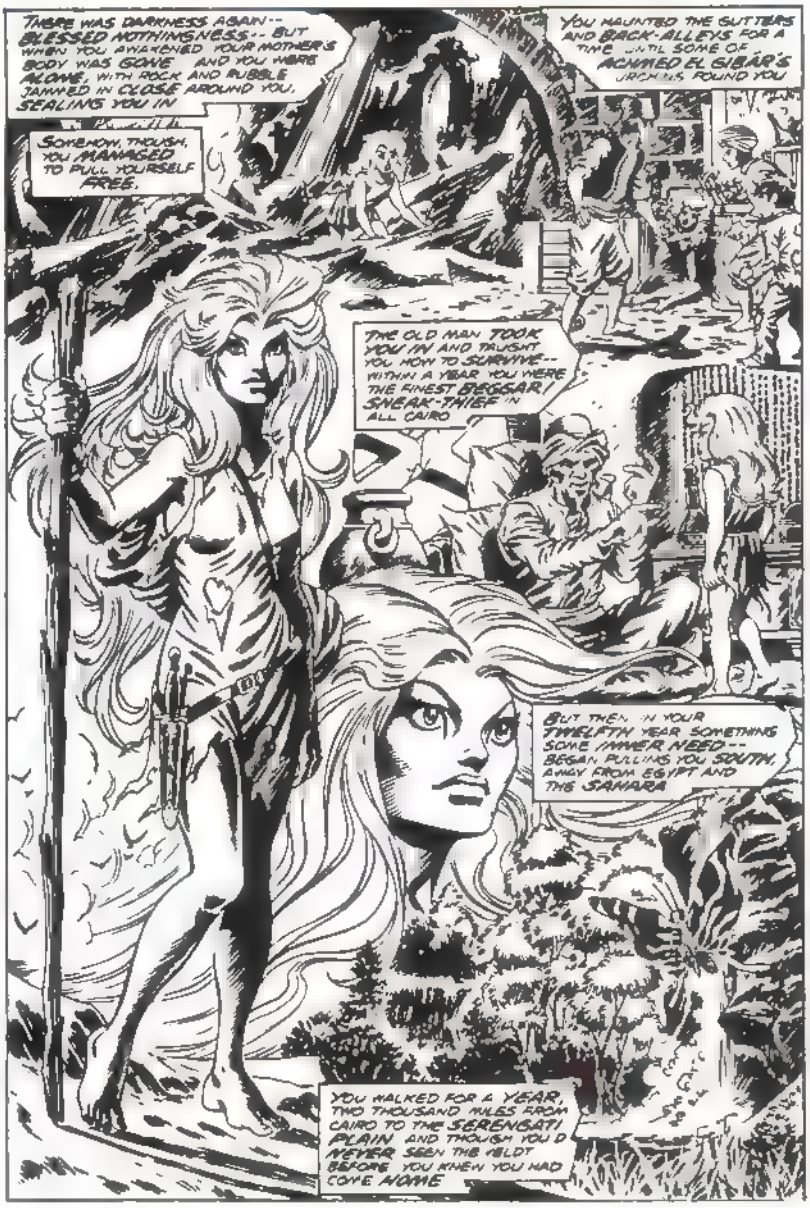
COCKRUM: It does bother me a little bit, but I can't see putting a mask on Storm, for instance. I don't know. More and more people are going to notice, I suppose, that there are strange people that look an awful lot like the X-Men hanging around up there in Westchester. Unless you go retroactively putting masks on people or having the Professor along fogging everybody's wits or something like that, I don't know what to do about it. And, of course, you've got guys like Nightcrawler, who just can't walk down the street without everybody doing a double-take anyway. In view of the mutant menace thing, I suppose it's a mistake to have them all run around unmasked like that and everything, but myself, I never liked the mutant menace storyline.

SANDERSON: *Oh, why is that? It seems so essential to the concept of the X-Men. It's cropped up so often..*

COCKRUM: The thing that always bothered me about the mutant menace hysteria is that nobody gets upset about Mr. Fantastic or even Ben Grimm, who's even weirder looking than most of the mutants. Nobody gets upset about Giant-Man. Anybody like that.

SANDERSON: *Any of the Avengers, really. The Beast, the Scarlet Witch, and Quicksilver are all mutants and once they become Avengers nobody seems to get upset at them. But they're all mutants*

COCKRUM: Yeah. It's a credibility gap.


THERE WAS DARKNESS AGAIN-- BLESSED NOTHINGNESS-- BUT WHEN YOU AWAKENED YOUR MOTHER'S BODY WAS GONE AND YOU WERE ALONE, WITH ROCK AND RUBBLE JAMMED IN CLOSE AROUND YOU, SEALING YOU IN
YOU HAUNTED THE GUTTERS AND BACK-ALLEYS FOR A TIME UNTIL SOME OF ACHMED EL GIBAR'S ARCHERS FOUND YOU
SOMEHOW, THOUGH, YOU MANAGED TO PULL YOURSELF FREE.
THE OLD MAN TOOK YOU IN AND TAUGHT YOU HOW TO SURVIVE-- WITHIN A YEAR YOU WERE THE FINEST BEGGAR/ SNEAK-THIEF IN ALL CAIRO
BUT THEN, IN YOUR TWELFTH YEAR SOMETHING SOME INNER NEED-- BEGAN PULLING YOU SOUTH, AWAY FROM EGYPT AND THE SAHARA
YOU WALKED FOR A YEAR, TWO THOUSAND MILES FROM CAIRO TO THE SERENGATI PLAIN AND THOUGH YOU'D NEVER SEEN THE WILDT BEFORE YOU KNEW YOU HAD COME HOME

SANDERSON: *Every so often they make a stab at Jameson's putting out an editorial against superheroes in general, but it's very infrequent*

COCKRUM: Apparently, just because you're born with those abilities, it makes you subject to suspicion. I just find the whole thing hard to swallow. Either you've got to hate all of them or you hate none of them. The mutants could just deny they're mutants. "Oh, I got these wings—oh, they're mechanical wings. I'm not going to show you my straps, but they are." That kind of thing. Cyclops could say, "I've got batteries in my head." Foster Grant! [*laughter*] If that's the case, then all the mutants just deny they're mutants and everybody'll love them.

SANDERSON: *What do you think of Storm's revised origin? Adding Modesty Blaise elements, the fact that she lived in America when she was a child [#102]. Did you agree with those at the time?*

COCKRUM: I didn't put up any fuss, but I didn't really agree with it. I really didn't want to see an origin for Storm, quite frankly. I really wanted everybody not to know who she is, where she came from. I was always sort of the opinion that Storm should be ageless. You could never tell whether she was fifteen or two hundred or a thousand years old.

SANDERSON: *Well, she's a mutant Perhaps she ages very slowly anyway, so it doesn't matter that you've established a birth year for her.*

COCKRUM: The establishment of the birth year bothered me more than anything else. There was a piece of copy in the first story that Len wrote, "Her eyes are blue and older than time," and I liked that. I thought we should never elaborate beyond that. And now she's just a person. I kind of enjoyed the idea that—well, she's not a goddess, we know she's not a goddess... but she *might* be, you know. Well, it's too late to do any of that now

SANDERSON: *Well, unless her mother turns out to actually be a goddess or something like that I understand Chris is toying with the idea of at least having her mother be the descendant of a line of Africans who have supernatural powers of some sort—or powers resembling supernatural powers*

COCKRUM: I hadn't heard that. I don't know how many readers ever noticed, but when the plane fell on her house, her mother was pregnant. And I'd prefer to believe nine months pregnant. I've always had this little germ of an idea in my head that she delivered in the wreckage and that Storm has a brother or sister somewhere Chris has always been reluctant to do anything with that idea

SANDERSON: *Now when it was decided to create the new team, was it always thought that practically all the old members had to go?*

COCKRUM: Yeah, with the exception of Cyclops, of course.

SANDERSON: *Was it always in mind that Cyclops would stay but everybody else would leave?*

COCKRUM: Yeah.

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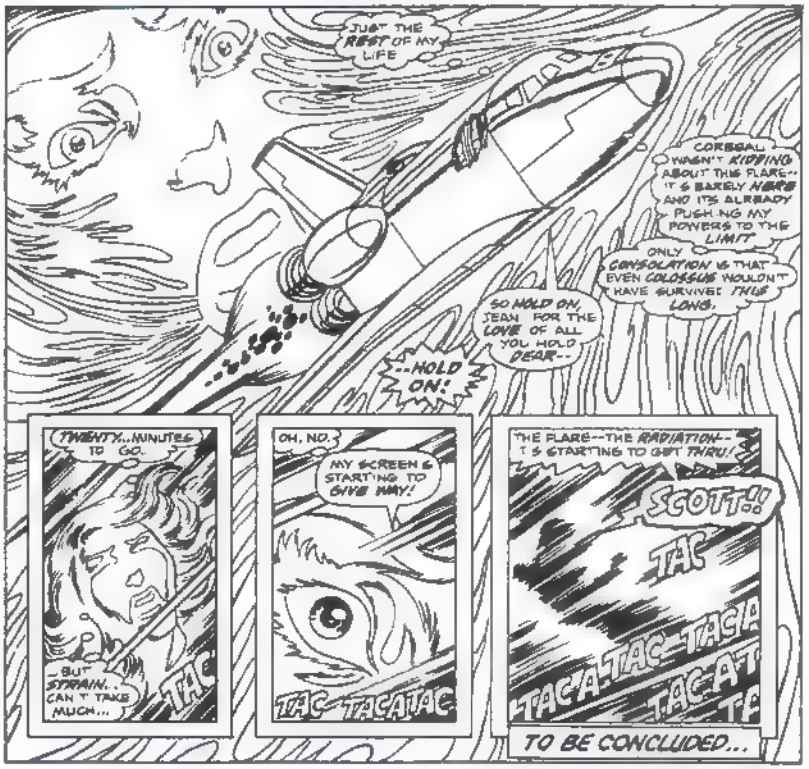
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
IN SEARCH OF MUTANT X
Cockrum/Austin


JUST THE REST OF MY LIFE
CORSAIR WASN'T KIDDING ABOUT THIS FLARE-- IT'S BARELY NOON AND IT'S ALREADY PUSHING MY POWERS TO THE LIMIT
ONLY CONSOLATION IS THAT EVEN COLOSSUS WOULDN'T HAVE SURVIVED THIS LONG.
SO HOLD ON, JEAN FOR THE LOVE OF ALL YOU HOLD DEAR--
--HOLD ON!
TWENTY...MINUTES TO GO.
--BUT STRAIN... CAN'T TAKE MUCH...
TAC
OH, NO.
MY SCREEN'S STARTING TO GIVE WAY!
TAC-TACATAC
THE FLARE--THE RADIATION-- IT'S STARTING TO GET THRU!
SCOTT!!
TAC
TACA-TAC-TACA
TAC-AT
TO BE CONCLUDED...

Jean Grey's death in the solar storm preceding her transformation into Phoenix. [*X-Men* #100 Claremont-Cockrum]

SANDERSON: *And why Cyclops?*

COCKRUM: Everybody involved liked Cyclops, felt he made a good leader, and it was a link with the old X Men. But everybody felt that the original team didn't sell well enough to support a new book That may actually not be true. I understand that although they cancelled the book while Roy and Neal Adams were doing it on the basis of earlier sales figures, when the final sales figures actually came in Roy's and Neal's issues did quite well. that's what I heard.

SANDERSON: *But it was decided to take no chances*

COCKRUM: Yeah. We all figured, if we're going to do a new book, let's do a new team. And I was just as happy that way, I think. I've always liked the old team but in many respects I don't think they're all that strong a team.

SANDERSON: *No. There's one issue in which Spider-Man holds four of them at bay at once [#35].*

COCKRUM: Yeah. Angel has always bothered me I've always been a big fan of Hawkman's. Hawkman is a character to be reckoned with, but what's Angel? He's an idiot that flies.

SANDERSON: *Hawkman's got all these other tricks the scientific weapons, the old weapons...*

COCKRUM: And the neat mask

SANDERSON: *And the neat mask, and also he does more with his wings.*

COCKRUM: And Angel just flies around. Not only that, he's blond and he's got white wings. I mean, borrring! [*laughter*]

SANDERSON: *Well, you can't really expect hair to be the same color as feathers, I suppose.*

COCKRUM: I'll tell you, my wife and I and Jo Duffy were kicking the Angel around—we were talking about winged characters and the Angel and one thing and another, and I designed a new character, which we worked out in a storyline about the Angel having gone schizo and turning into a Batman-style character. We called him Dark Angel, and somehow or other we figured that by the end of the two or three-part story that we were working out that Dark Angel would split off somehow or other from Angel and become a separate character. And we would have an ominous Batman-style winged character in dark garb and all that and black wings and...

SANDERSON: *What Nighthawk should be*

COCKRUM: Yeah. And also not mess with the Angel fans who would still have Angel. I don't know if anything wil ever come of it but it was a neat exercise in working out a character. I mean, he would be a frightening character, the creature of the night that Batman used to be, black wings and a savage looking face and a fun character to think about, but we never did anything. We used to talk about doing a story, but there was never any time. That's always the biggest problem: there's never any time to do any of the stuff we talk about...

SANDERSON: *Len says that even though Jean left with the other X-Men in the first regular issue of the new* X-Men *[#94] you were both planning to bring her back almost immediately*

COCKRUM: Well, we didn't figure she went any great distance. She only went to Manhattan. If Scott wanted to, he could see her every night.

SANDERSON: *Their parting scene in that issue seemed to me rather unconvincing. She says, "Well, you've got to come with me. Am I more important or is your job?" and he says "the job" and stays. It seemed a rather fast decision.*

COCKRUM: It's just that he doesn't feel he can go into the regular world because of his eyes. He's afraid of the regular world.

SANDERSON: *Even though he once had this job as a*

radio reporter—ugh.

COCKRUM: I don't remember that.

SANDERSON: *When the team split up in the Drake era.*

COCKRUM: I was just rereading all that stuff. I must have skipped over that one.

SANDERSON: *It's just a brief panel or two, I think. The same issue in which Jean's working as a fashion model [#48]*

COCKRUM: Oh, yeah. Somehow or other I missed the radio reporter part.

SANDERSON: *Why did the old X-Men leave? They said in this very fast, brief scene, that they just felt stifled in the mansion.*

COCKRUM: They left because we told them they had to [laughter]. That's basically it.

SANDERSON: *You didn't have any plans to reveal why Professor X's mansion is a stifling influence on growing young mutants*

COCKRUM: Oh, I think that they all just felt like the time had come to go out. You can't hang around school forever. I always sort of felt like, what do these guys do when they hang around the school anyway? None of them have jobs, none of them have outside activities.

SANDERSON: *But anyway, Len says that you were not only going to bring Jean back, but that you were going to bring her back as a member of the team, and that you would be upgrading her powers.*

COCKRUM: I think he's right, but I'm not sure.

SANDERSON: *Upgrading not to the extent of the Phoenix, but...*

COCKRUM: Well, we never intended her to come back and just be plain old wimpy Marvel Girl.

SANDERSON: *Now why don't you like Marvel Girl?*

COCKRUM: Because she's a wimp. She's a Stan Lee girl. I don't want to say anything against Stan, because I've got all the respect in the world for him, but when he was creating that characters of the early '60s, all the girl characters he created were simps—the housewife heroes. Sue Storm is the prime example. My wife just gnashes her teeth and screams when she sees Sue Storm in action, but they were all like that. They were there to be looked at and rescued mostly. Jim Shooter's attitude toward the female characters is largely the same, and I gather that's why he doesn't want the Scarlet Witch in the *Avengers* while he's writing it, because she's too powerful a character. And he's also beginning in Tigra to have a cuddly girl That was my biggest objection. I like female characters who support the group If you've got a team of characters who have to go out and place themselves in danger, you don't want one fifth of that group to be expected to be rescued.

HEAR ME, X-MEN!
NO LONGER AM I THE WOMAN YOU KNEW!
I AM FIRE! AND LIFE INCARNATE! NOW AND FOREVER--
--I AM PHOENIX!
...AS THE SCUMMY, GARBAGE-STREWN WATER GOES WITH IRIDESCENT RAINBOW FIRE...
AND THEN EXPLODES!

Rebirth from the ashes: after "dying" in the solar storm of #100, Jean Grey makes her very first appearance as Phoenix [*X-Men* #101: Claremont-Cockrum-Chiaramonte]

IT BEGINS.
SHE RETURNS TO THE HEART OF THE SPHERE, TO THE NRU-TRON GALAXY AND THERE SHE--
CHANGES--
--WOMAN TO BIRD-FORM, FLESH TO LIVING ENERGY. JEAN GREY TO PHOENIX--POWER FLARING STAR-BRIGHT AROUND HER IN THE ABSOLUTE DARKNESS.
SHE REACHES OUT, IMAGES CASCADING THROUGH HER MIND. THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS BECOMING TANGIBLE--SHE TOUCHING THEM, THEY HER--THE PATTERNS OF HER LIFE, OF THE X-MEN'S LIVES, BECOMING ONE WITH THE LATTICE PATTERN SURROUNDING THE N-GALAXY
REALITY TWISTS, COLLAPSES, RE-FORMS--THE STRAIN MORE THAN MIND OR BODY CAN BEAR--AND SHE NO LONGER KNOWS WHETHER SHE'S BIRD-FORM OR HUMAN, WHETHER SHE'S TRAPPED WITHIN THE SPHERE...
...OR GROWN SO LARGE SHE DWARFS THE ENTIRE SOLAR SYSTEM
SHE FALTERS--PANIC SEIZING HER AS SHE REALIZES THAT FOR ALL HER AWESOME POWER, SHE STILL CAN'T DO IT ALONE. AND THEN, SUDDENLY, SHE ISN'T ALONE. THE SPIRITS OF THE X-MEN ARE WITH HER, GIVING OF THEMSELVES AS STORM AND CORSAIR GAVE
IN THAT INSTANT--AS SHE FEELS HER POWER, THE POWER OF HER FRIENDS, SING WITHIN HER; AS SHE REMEMBERIZES THE ENERGY LATTICE--IT'S AS IF A DOOR HAS OPENED BEFORE HER EYES.
A NEW PATTERN FORMS--SHAPED LIKE THE MYSTIC TREE OF LIFE--WITH XAVIER ITS LOFTY CROWN AND COLOSSUS ITS BASE. EACH X-MAN HAS A PLACE, EACH A PURPOSE GREATER THAN HIMSELF OR HERSELF.
AND THE HEART OF THE TREE, THE CATALYST THAT BINDS THESE WAYWARD SOULS TOGETHER, IS PHOENIX. TIAHRA'EM: CHILD OF THE SUN, CHILD OF LIFE, THE VISION OF THE HARMONY OF THINGS.

Phoenix, drawing on the spirits of her friends, the other X-Men, prevents the destruction of the universe [*X-Men* #108: Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

SANDERSON: *I don't know if Marvel Girl had to be rescued that often*

COCKRUM: No, later on she helped out more, but still... she was "pfffffttt!"

SANDERSON: *Perhaps it was just that her powers weren't used all that impressively.*

COCKRUM: That may be it too. But we felt that she had to be beefed up one way or another. Now that I think about it, I think Len's right: we just wrote her out while we thought about it. I don't think we ever intended for it to get out of hand the way it did.

SANDERSON: *Her powers would have been increased but not to cosmic level by any means.*

COCKRUM: Actually, when we introduced Phoenix I don't think we intended for her to keep super cosmic powers, because the rest of the group becomes superfluous then. We had intended for her to either lose a sizeable portion of it or limit herself one way or another. So yeah, she was a powerful female but she would not make the rest of the group unnecessary.

SANDERSON: *About what power level do you think she would have been at?*

COCKRUM: I don't really know.

SANDERSON: *Equal to Storm's? Storm's been doing some pretty powerful stuff lately, though.*

COCKRUM: Well, Storm's a pretty powerful lady too. But I think we probably would have settled on that power level, yeah.

SANDERSON: *Now, when you and Len brought Jean back, did you also intend to change her costume?*

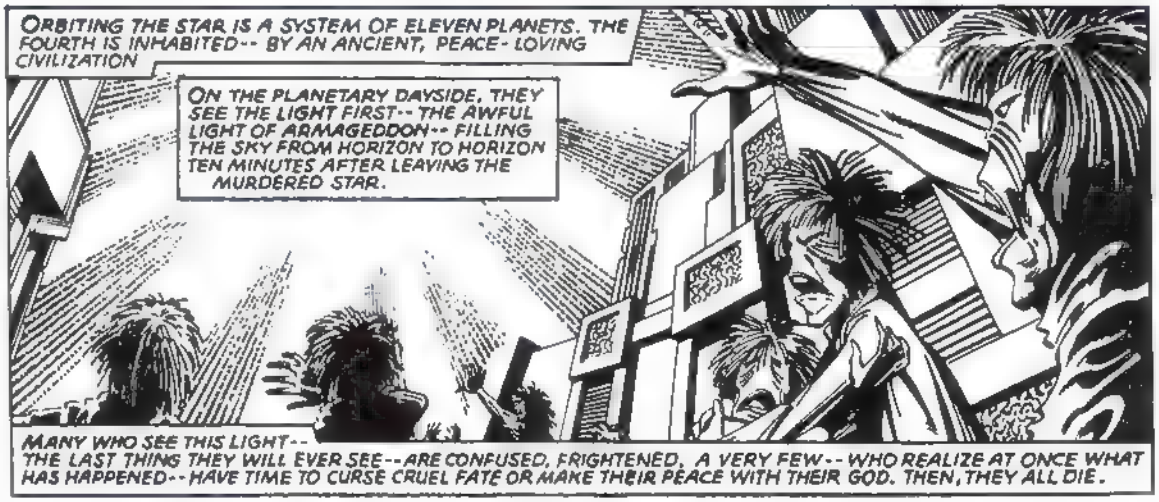
COCKRUM: I don't know if Len intended to; I intended to [*laughter*].

SANDERSON: *So it was no longer the Carnaby Street Super-Heroine Shop Special?*

COCKRUM: I suppose what we put Phoenix into is kind of a Cockrum-Cliche costume, but I liked it.

SANDERSON: *Did it take a lot of time to settle on that particular costume, or was it pretty much what you intended from the beginning?*

COCKRUM: The design was one of the first one or two things I came up with in the beginning. I remember now; I did five different variations on a theme, so to speak. They all had the sash and they all had the neck, and I think they all had the gloves and


ORBITING THE STAR IS A SYSTEM OF ELEVEN PLANETS. THE FOURTH IS INHABITED-- BY AN ANCIENT, PEACE-LOVING CIVILIZATION
ON THE PLANETARY DAYSIDE, THEY SEE THE LIGHT FIRST-- THE AWFUL LIGHT OF ARMAGEDDON-- FILLING THE SKY FROM HORIZON TO HORIZON TEN MINUTES AFTER LEAVING THE MURDERED STAR.
MANY WHO SEE THIS LIGHT-- THE LAST THING THEY WILL EVER SEE--ARE CONFUSED, FRIGHTENED. A VERY FEW--WHO REALIZE AT ONCE WHAT HAS HAPPENED--HAVE TIME TO CURSE CRUEL FATE OR MAKE THEIR PEACE WITH THEIR GOD. THEN, THEY ALL DIE.

The supernova triggered when Dark Phoenix consumes the energy of a distant star annihilates the "asparagus people" of one of its planets. [*X-Men* #135. Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

the boots, I'm not sure

SANDERSON: *You may see it as a Cockrum Cliche, but it's not really a cliche compared to other super-heroine costumes, because it pretty much covers all of her, whereas other super-heroines tend to wear less.*

COCKRUM: That's true. The thing is, it's possible to show just as much of the girl by covering her completely as it is by taking it off. I mean, you're still showing her shape. The thing that caused us difficulty with Phoenix was the color, because my original design was white and gold, an all-white costume with gold boots, gloves, sash, and all that, and I loved it. I still like it. And by this time I guess Archie Goodwin was Editor-in-Chief and we apparently were not allowed to introduce new costumes without the okay from Archie, and Archie didn't like the white. He felt—and he may be right—that you would be able to read the next page through the costume. He may be right, but I snarfed and bitched and moaned and raised hell and stomped up and down the halls and Archie got adamant and he said, "No, use her original colors!" And so that's what we were stuck with. And I was really miffed about it for a long time, and later on, as I recall, Archie told me if I wanted to I could change the color back to write if I wanted to, and by that time—several issues later—I figured, "Oh, hell." [*laughter*] It was pointless. So she stayed with the green. Chris tells me that if we ever brought her back he'd like to darken her green. I doubt if we'll ever bring her back, but apparently he wasn't happy with the shade of green she had.

SANDERSON: *I also noticed that when she first came back after being written out, her style of dress in her non-super-hero identity had considerably changed as well*

COCKRUM: I was dressing her out of *Cosmopolitan*. I was trying to pick specific sources for wardrobes, less for the guys because it's easy to dress guys...

SANDERSON: *Well, as Chris put it, she no longer looked like a Young Republican. The costume she wore at the airport...*

COCKRUM: That was straight out of *Cosmopolitan*.

SANDERSON: *And of course there was the long formal sexy dress in the Sentinels story.*

COCKRUM: I had a different idea of how I wanted her to look than I had for anybody else earlier, and that's what I was doing. We picked clothing sources for these characters. Moira MacTaggert we dressed out of *Atlanta Monthly* or something like that, something very ordinary...

SANDERSON: *Before she started wearing jumpsuits*

COCKRUM: Yeah

SANDERSON: *You're also the one who created Wolverine's western look, it seems.*

COCKRUM: It seemed natural.

SANDERSON: *Why? Because you figured he was from the west of Canada?*

COCKRUM: I suppose. He just struck me as the type of guy that would relax in jeans and a jean jacket and things like that.

SANDERSON: *And the hat*

COCKRUM: The hat, yeah.

SANDERSON: *Okay, so how did the actual creation of Phoenix come about?*

COCKRUM: We agonized for a long time over the color, and once we figured out the color we agonized over what the hell she did. "Well, she can die and be resurrected with some super-power." I don't know if we made it all that clear to the readers, but we knew she died up there and recreated herself [#100-101], and later on we made it more clear, but beyond that it took us a long time to figure out exactly what she did, so we left her in the hospital for several issues, while we thought about it.

SOON, IN THE SLEEPY HAMLET OF ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON, JUST DOWN THE ROAD FROM BARD COLLEGE -- WHERE PROFESSOR JOHN GREY HAS TAUGHT FOR THE PAST EIGHTEEN YEARS
HERE IS THE GREY'S HOUSE. ALL LOOKS PEACEFUL
I'M... TOO LATE! MISS LOCKE ANTICIPATED MY COMING HERE. THIS NOTE TELLS WHERE VON DOOM IS HOLDING ARCADE
THOUGH PHOENIX IS NO MORE, VILLAINS WILL STRIKE AT THE X-MEN THROUGH HER FAMILY
THIS IS THE HOLOMPATHIC MATRIX CRYSTAL GIVEN THE GREYS BY EMPRESS LILANDRA AFTER JEAN'S DEATH. IT NOT ONLY CONTAINS A THREE-DIMENSIONAL IMAGE OF JEAN GREY- PHOENIX- BUT ALSO THE ESSENCE OF HER PERSONALITY
"X-MEN" #139 ME AGAIN
AH, MY BELOVED FRIEND. WOULD I HAD DIED IN YOUR PLACE I... STILL MISS YOU.
THE X-MEN COULD NOT SAVE YOU JEAN, BUT WE CAN -- WE WILL SAVE YOUR PARENTS. OH THAT YOU HAVE MY WORD.

The emphatic crystal with Jean's face responds to Storm's worries about the X-Men's kidnapped loved ones. [*X-Men* #145: Claremont-Cockrum-Rubinstein]

SANDERSON: *And what did you decide?*
COCKRUM: Well, it started out being an enormous upgrading of what she already did. So powerful that nobody could cope with it.
SANDERSON: *Which I suppose is what Phoenix really is. She turned out to have near infinite telekinetic power.*
COCKRUM: Yeah, she's the Force [*laughter*].
SANDERSON: *And the Force can have its dark side.*
COCKRUM: She went far beyond anything I'd envisioned when I was on the book. I never saw her as saving or destroying or menacing the entire universe.
SANDERSON: *So you didn't foresee her achieving the very high level of power, enough to save the universe?*
COCKRUM: No, we had talked, but now that I think about it, it seems to me now that Chris had said something about using the power to save the universe in #108, but that wiped it to such a degree that it reduced her powers. I think that's what he was planning on doing. And after that, theoretically, she was not supposed to be that super-cosmic person
SANDERSON: *Now, what did you think of the "Dark Phoenix" storyline and her resulting demise?*
COCKRUM: I'm sorry that it had to come about. I liked the storyline, I thought it was well-done. If I had been doing the book, it wouldn't have come about because I wouldn't have drawn her destroying a world full of people...

SANDERSON: *Or asparagus-people*
COCKRUM: Well, asparagus-people are still people.
SANDERSON: *That's right. Broiling asparagus is* a capital offense.
COCKRUM: [*laughter*] *But I wouldn't have done that, and Jean was another character John didn't like, I think, so this was setting up getting rid of her. She had to be punished for her misdeeds. I liked her; I wouldn't have done that. So the storyline would have ended differently She wouldn't have died, I'm sure, and I wouldn't have agreed to her just becoming Marvel Girl again either.*
SANDERSON: *Would you like to see Jean come back and do you think it will ever happen?*
COCKRUM: Yes and no. I'd like to see her come back, and I don't think she ever will, but... [laughter].
SANDERSON: *But. Okay.*
COCKRUM: Let's put it this way: I know more about the inner workings of things than I can really put on the tape. I doubt she'll come back, but I'll finish it with that "but "
SANDERSON: *I am told that you were the one who put in the "Crystal Globe" sequence in the first Doom issue [#145] in which Jean's face in the globe changes expression. What was that all about?*
COCKRUM: Well, if there's any of Jean at all in there, she picked up some of what was happening with her parents and everybody being kidnapped from Storm handling the crystal.
SANDERSON: *There's still an imprint of her personality on that ball.*
COCKRUM: On the back of that page I drew a three-panel view of Westchester as seen from New York City and the Phoenix effect erupted into the sky again [*laughter*]. It was all on the back of the page.
SANDERSON: *How did you come up with the Phoenix effect?*
COCKRUM: I don't know, it just seemed like kind of a neat thing to do. Byrne refined it into what is, of course. It was a lot rougher the way I did it. I like his better.
SANDERSON: *Because he credits you with it.*
COCKRUM: Well, I did the bird, but I didn't do it the way he does it, and I like his better. Mine was more Kirby-crackle, brush-scratch sort of thing, and he refined it into the very elegant, sweeping stylized bird that it is now. It's much more attractive done this way and if she ever came back I would continue to do it his way.

SANDERSON: *What do you think of fan criticism that Jean's personality was completely distorted in the new X-Men book, that there was no connection between the old Jean and the new one, that she was a totally different person. Even John seems to think this to an extent. That in fact Chris distorted her personality.*

COCKRUM: I don't know whether it's true or not, but I don't think I give a damn, really We were creating a new book and we were trying to be consistent wherever possible, wherever necessary. I mean, it was a new book; we were starting from scratch. We had holdovers, but to hell with it—it was a new book.

SANDERSON: *Do you think there is anything special about the Scott-Jean romance and that it was well handled in the new series, or do you think certain fans have overrated its importance or its difference from other super-hero romances at Marvel?*

COCKRUM: No, I liked it. I thought it was well-handled My one criticism would be something Chris mentioned himself recently, that is, that it was the main thrust of the book and now that it's over people have been writing saying that there is no main thrust to the book—

SANDERSON: *Which makes it sound as if it was indeed an important element*

COCKRUM: If it's the case we'd better find some other main thrust real fast. I enjoyed it. I thought it took them an awful long time to figure out they were in love with each other, years and years, but sometimes I wondered about Scott. He did an awful lot of worrying about whether he was in love with her or properly in love with her or what the hell was she anyway, more so than I think he really should have, but he's a big worry wart anyway, he always was

SANDERSON: *John says he often bases the characters he draws on real people. Do you do that, especially with regard to the X-Men characters?*

COCKRUM: Sort of but not exactly. When I came up with the new X-Men, for instance, I had specific faces in mind for most of them. Not that I was basing them on people I knew or anything like that, but I knew exactly what I wanted them to look like. In the case of Nightcrawler, for instance, I drew exactly what I wanted, and later on I saw a picture of Daniel Ellsberg and I thought, "My God, he looks like Nightcrawler!"

SANDERSON: *Did that influence the way you drew Nightcrawler after that?*

COCKRUM: Not really, but I was rather shocked to see somebody that actually looked like him. I have a ture I clipped out of *Time* Magazine, with Ellsberg: his hair was curlier than Nightcrawler's is, and he didn't have yellow glowing eyes, but God! Did he look like Nightcrawler! It was really bizarre.

Storm's regality. [*X-Men* #145: Claremont-Cockrum-Rubinstein]

SANDERSON: *It would be an interesting story about Ellsberg stealing the Pentagon papers, popping in, bamfing out...*

COCKRUM: [*laughter*] Storm looks like my cat. I kept the face from the Black Cat and I used my cat as the basis for the face.

SANDERSON: *By he way, why do you like what Walt Kelly used to call the "blunked-out eye" look on characters?*

COCKRUM: The "blunked-out eye look" [*laughter*]?

SANDERSON: *You know, whenever he did a* Little Orphan Annie *parody, the characters would say they had "blunked-out eyes."*

COCKRUM: I dunno. I just do. The way I see it is that they have eyes that are like cat eyes. They pick up and reflect light. That's exactly what I intended for Storm. When she stands any distance away from you all you see is the light reflecting out of her eyes

SANDERSON: *And the same with Nightcrawler?*

COCKRUM: I think Nightcrawler's eyes actually

glow, and Phoenix's eyes glow when she's using the power.

SANDERSON: *And how about Colossus? He also has the blunked-out eye look.*

COCKRUM: I suppose it's the same case. When he's armored up he has glowing eyes.

SANDERSON: *And Wolverine—it's just when he's got his mask on, and I suppose that's just a convention.*

COCKRUM: Yeah. as a matter of fact I recall having done Banshee that way when he was really firing a power blast. I think it's kind of like super-charged energy and all you can see is energy in the eyes.

SANDERSON: *It is possible that since Storm has cat-like eyes that when there's a lot of light they narrow into slits, like a cat's?*

COCKRUM: They do. The thing that we intended with Storm, and made some mention of it in the copy—I don't think Chris has ever really picked up on it—is that the sky reflects the color of Storm's eyes, and if she's angry her eyes get dark and so does the sky.

SANDERSON: *Does that mean that if she's in a bad mood for some reason she unintentionally affects the weather?*

COCKRUM: We just did that; I'd forgotten. It's in a two-panel little thing. I told you earlier about the argument that the Professor and the Angel are having about Wolverine [#148]. Storm is standing there too and she's angry with Angel and I think Chris is going to have to cover it mostly in copy because there was not a lot of opportunity to show the sky in these scenes, but the sky is darkening

SANDERSON: *It's a good thing she's usually so even-tempered. If she ever has a bad nightmare, look out.*

COCKRUM: I suppose she could get angry and consciously not allow the weather to go...

SANDERSON: *I should hope so, but in a nightmare she wouldn't have any control.*

COCKRUM: That's an interesting idea. She must have the control, though. I would assume she does.

SANDERSON: *Why does Storm take Wolverine's part so much? It has also been asked by certain critics that since Storm is so devoted to the preservation of life, how is it that she is able to get along with Wolverine?*

COCKRUM: I think she sees that there's somebody in there struggling to overcome what he is, even though most of him seems to be perfectly happy with what he is.

SANDERSON: *So that you do see this double side to Wolverine in that even though he does like tearing people apart when they're his enemies, he does to an extent fear going off the deep end.*

COCKRUM: I don't think he fears it all that much. There's a side of him that regrets that he can't be like other people, I think, and that's the side of him that's friends with the rest of the X-Men and Storm realizes that this is the case, that there is one part of him that regrets that he's so antisocial.

SANDERSON: *And that excuses the rest? Do you yourself think that Wolverine's killings are morally justifiable, whether it's slashing up the Hellfire Club flunkies or the celebrated Savage Land killing [#116]?*

COCKRUM: Personally, I don't think he should have done that, but...

SANDERSON: *It could well be argued, for example, as I think was implied in that confrontation Storm and Wolverine had in the Washington story, that all he has to do if he's got this adamantium skeleton is hit somebody and they'll be knocked unconscious It's not necessary to slash them up.*

COCKRUM: He does have that bloodthirsty side of him. In some respects he is related to the cats, I guess. He smells the blood and...

SANDERSON: *Well, real wolverines are like that, apparently, but do you think that most of his killings have been morally justifiable, if not the Savage Land one?*

COCKRUM: I don't think that one was. I don't think it's necessary for him most of the time to kill people. However, I think in a case of somebody trying to kill you, you stop 'em any way you can. I'm one of those people who believes that terrorists should be blown away, not dealt with, and Wolverine does too, I'm sure. I suppose that makes me as bloodthirsty as him.

SANDERSON: *What do you try bring out in each of the X-Men visually, in terms of what they look like, the way they act? For example, John says he always drew Storm to emphasize her regality.*

COCKRUM: I've always tried to do that too. I always tried to have some sort of an air of not aloofness, but more like self-sufficiency and maybe mystery about her. I remember doing something very early, in one of the first couple of issues. She had created a tidal wave in the halls of Valhalla Mountain that swept away the soldiers, and she said, "Don't worry, Cyclops, they won't bother us any more," and she had a little smile, and it was just a little bit of inner amusement as far as I was concerned. And we got all these letters, "Oo, that snotty bitch! She's being so superior." And I just intended it as a private chuckle, as far as I was concerned.

SANDERSON: *She does seem to have this gentle sense of humor—maybe not so gentle in this case—*

COCKRUM: Well, she didn't hurt anybody, and it was not necessary to blow holes in things, and she was just mildly amused, but she wasn't being superior.

CASSIDY KEEP-- FIRST BUILT BY LIAM CASSIDY OVER A THOUSAND YEARS AGO TO DEFEND THIS STRETCH OF COASTLINE FROM VIKING RAIDERS...
...REBUILT A SCORE OF TIMES OVER THE CENTURIES AS IT STOOD AGAINST EVERY INVADER WHO TRIED TO CONQUER IT--EVER PROUD, EVER DEFIANT--ITS TALL, FORBIDDING WALLS STAINED WITH THE BLOOD OF A HUNDRED SIEGES.
BUT IN ALL THE CASTLE'S GLORIOUS HISTORY, THOSE WALLS HAD NEVER FALLEN TO FORCE OF ARMS.
UNGLAUBLICH!
BANSHEE THIS IS INCREDIBLE! AND YOU SAY YOU GREW UP HERE?!
THAT I DID, KURT WAGNER
IT MUST HAVE BEEN MARVELOUS.
AH, WELL, I SUPPOSE IT'S TIME FOR ME TO SWITCH TO MY HUMAN GUISE.
OH, I DUNNO, BUB. PLACE LIKE THIS, I FIGGER YOU'LL FIT RIGHT IN THE WAY YOU ARE.

Cockrum builds a castle for the Banshee. [*X-Men* #101 Claremont-Cockrum-Chiaramonte]

A spectacular crash at Kennedy Airport. [*X-Men* #101: Claremont-Cockrum-Chiaramonte]

SANDERSON: *She may have a goddess's bearing, but she's not arrogant toward people.*
COCKRUM: She tends to be gentle, she tends to be... human. She does have a very quiet sense of humor. The trouble with getting a sense of humor out of *The X-Men* is that—sorry about this—Chris doesn't have one [*laughter*]. I don't mean to insult Chris, and I apologize, Chris, don't get mad [*laughter*].
SANDERSON: *What kind of personality were you trying to bring out in Jean?*
COCKRUM: Jean? Well, we made her a bit more flamboyant than she was... You've got to remember, she went into business as a fashion model and stuff like that.
SANDERSON: *That's right, modeling bathing suits.*
COCKRUM: Yeah. A shrinking violet is not going to go out and model bikinis and stuff like that. I was just going more in that direction. She was supposedly sharing an apartment with Misty—
SANDERSON: *Who might have had an influence on her, I suppose.*
COCKRUM: Yeah, if this wimp moved in, Misty might have said, "My God, girl, you're a wimp! We're gonna fix that!"
SANDERSON: *I always figured that's what happened. that was the big change in Jean's life after moving out of the mansion. Makes for an interesting pair, her and Scott, Mister Repression and Miss Flamboyance.*
COCKRUM: [*laughter*] Yeah. What's the point of having a green-eyed redhead if she can't be flamboyant anyway? That's a terrific combination, and to have her be a wimp for ten years... There's been this gorgeous green-eyed redhead being a wimp for ten years?
SANDERSON: *Actually, if you look at the first issue, she's very self-possessed and independent and sexy.*
COCKRUM: But it couldn't stay that way [*laughter*].
SANDERSON: *No.*
COCKRUM: So—I've always had a soft spot for green-eyed redheads. So I wanted her to look terrific and be terrific, and she kind of got cliched—became a cliche— unfortunately Because before Farrah Fawcett became big she was doing Wella-Balsam commercials and things like that and occasionally appearing in *Cosmo* and I thought she was terrific and so that's who Jean became. And then she had to un-become Farrah Fawcett after Farrah became a big deal, because then everybody said, "Oh well, they're ripping off Farrah

Fawcett "

SANDERSON: *So she is based in part on someone real.*

COCKRUM: Yeah. But I rather hoped that it would be played down after Farrah became a big deal, because everybody was making jokes about "What a great pair of teeth" and things like that. [*sighs*]

SANDERSON: *You seem to emphasize Nightcrawler's flamboyance as well.*

COCKRUM: He behaves the way I'd behave if I was him, that's all [*laughter*]. Don't let this overweight, middle-aged body fool you. I've taken fencing lessions and I have a sword collection and I'm into Errol Flynn pictures and stuff like that, and he's me, that's all. He's me if I was blue.

SANDERSON: *You're apparently changing the costumes a bit these days...*

COCKRUM: Am I?

SANDERSON: *Well, Terry Austin says you are, back to the way you were when you did the book originally He said that John altered them a bit. Is his conscious or are you just drawing them the way you used to?*

COCKRUM: I'm drawing them the way I always drew them, I guess.

SANDERSON: *He said there have been subtle modifications that John has made and now you're not doing them.*

COCKRUM: The only thing I was really aware of was that he changed the design of the Phoenix insignia...

SANDERSON: *I think here are things like Cyclops's visor and .*

COCKRUM: Well, he wanted to go back to the original.

SANDERSON: *I think Austin said something about the shape of Storm's boots.*

COCKRUM: He flared the tops. They were really wide up here, and I always figured they'd flap when you walked if they were that wide. Mine are skin tight, that's all.

SANDERSON: *Now, you also made this big change in Wolverine's costume just before you left the book originally [#107]. Do you wish he had kept that costume?*

COCKRUM: Yes. That was the intention. That was going to be his new costume. You have no idea what agony we all went through over that costume. I designed fourteen million costumes for Wolverine, none of which satisfied anybody. Well, maybe you could get two people liking one specific costume, and Shooter hated them all, said "No, they've got to look like a Wolverine costume!" So finally...

SANDERSON: *As if a wolverine looks like anything Wolverine has ever dressed in.*

COCKRUM: I've got pictures of Wolverines and

Scott's father, Major Christopher Summers, now Corsair, leader of the space adventurers knows as the Starjammers. [*X-Men* #108: Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

they're the boringest-looking animals you've ever seen [*laughter*]. I mean, certainly not costume material. So I did this black-and-brown thing, two-tone brown thing, with claws and stuff, and everybody finally decided they liked that one. So okay, that was going to be the new costume for Wolverine, because blue and yellow, what is that for a wolverine?

SANDERSON: *What qualities did you think this costume brought out? More savagery, perhaps? More animalistic?*

COCKRUM: It was supposed to be more animalistic, that's all.

SANDERSON: *Of course, it has also been pointed out that since he pulled it off a Timber Wolf clone, the same people who are suspicious that Colossus is a swipe of Ferro Lad think that Wolverine is a swipe off Timber Wolf.*

COCKRUM: Well... [*laughter*] no comment, except that I didn't create Wolverine, so I couldn't have swiped him.

SANDERSON: *Well, there's the costume, anyway.*

COCKRUM: That's true. They used to have the same haircut, although they've gone to great pains to make it look like Timber Wolf's got a couple of spikes growing out of his head now. Looks to me like if you threw him into a wall he'd stick in it.

SANDERSON: *Would you still like to see Wolverine*

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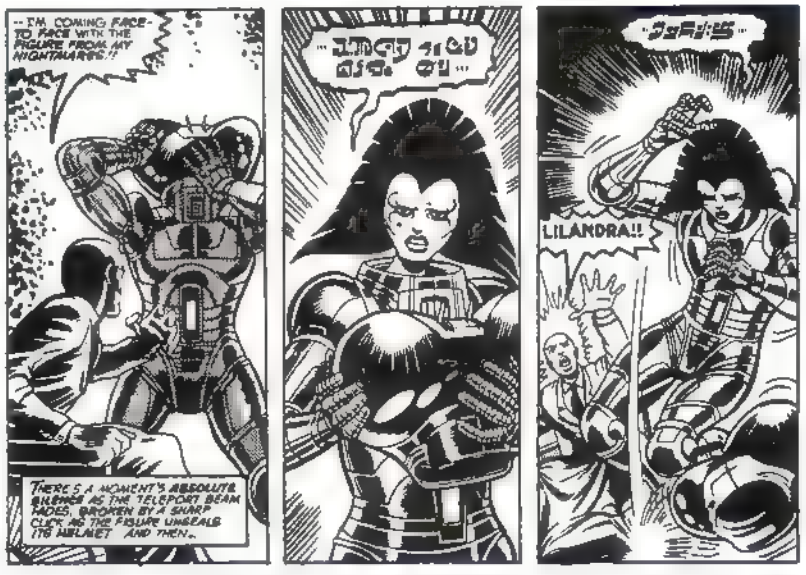
X-MEN™
ENTER THE STARJAMMERS!


--I'M COMING FACE-TO-FACE WITH THE FIGURE FROM MY NIGHTMARES!!
THERE'S A MOMENT'S ABSOLUTE SILENCE AS THE TELEPORT BEAM FADES, BROKEN BY A SHARP CLICK AS THE FIGURE UNSEALS ITS HELMET AND THEN...
LILANDRA!!

Xavier first meets Lilandra of the alien Shi'ar. [*X-Men* #105: Claremont-Cockrum-Layton]

get the old costume you have him back?

COCKRUM: Actually, I could live with the costume the way it is, but we're getting a lot of complaints from people at the office about the colors. They feel that he tends to disappear against the backgrounds and of course that's what a Wolverine would want to do, I think. I don't know if the colors will be changed or not. I could live with them the way he is now.

SANDERSON: *Did you and Chris hit it off as a team from the first issue you did together?*

COCKRUM: Yeah, I think so. Chris had always been in on it anyway. There were four people who sat in on those plotting sessions and I think the other one was Scott Edelman—Chris was always there...

SANDERSON: *Chris said his major contribution at the early sessions was figuring out a way of getting rid of the Living Island in the first story. Do you remember any others that he might not recall?*

COCKRUM: What I remember primarily is that the original story idea was absolutely horrible and I was sitting there going, "Aaghhh, can't do this." It was something to do with sending the new team down to rescue the old X-Men to South America and finding a whole bunch of Aztec gods walking around and raising hell and having to combat the Aztec gods who would wind up to be the original X-Men dressed as Aztec gods and I was going, "Noooooooo..." [*laughter*]

SANDERSON: *Ah yes, the Kukulcan syndrome [#25-36].*

COCKRUM: Yes, and this went on for about five hours, I seem to recall, and finally I don't know if anybody else disliked it as much as I did, but I finally said, "Listen, I don't think I can stand this" and Len went out and took a pill—he was taking a lot of tranquilizers in those days [*laughter*].

SANDERSON: *Being editor-in-chief.*

COCKRUM: And we all got up and walked around, and sat down and started thinking about it again, and I don't know where the idea came from but I think maybe Chris is right thinking about the gravometric lines of force. That sounds like Claremont language to me. So right from the start he was a contributing personality.

SANDERSON: *To what extent do you co-plot* X-Men*?*

COCKRUM: As much as possible. the ones that I've done, #145 through #148, I did not have a real big hand in, because Chris was having to turn in plots to meet a schedule and he was turning them in without really consulting me, although I have a habit of calling Chris up in the middle of the night and telling him why something won't work and what we should do about it. And somethimes I can't figure out what we'll do about it either and we'll both sit there and we'll blow thirty dollars worth of money on Ma Bell figuring it out.

SANDERSON: *What about in the old days?*

COCKRUM: We used to have plotting sessions, and for #149, which is what I'm working on now, we went to lunch with Louise Jones and sat down and kicked the whole idea around, and I'm having a real happy time with this story, which is clicking like, zoom As opposed to #148, which I hated so much it took me six weeks to draw and...

SANDERSON: *Oh, why did you hate it?*

COCKRUM: For one thing, it had Dazzler and the disco in it and I hate Dazzler and I hate discos, and for another thing --well, that's the major thing.

SANDERSON: *What share of the co-plotting do you do?*

COCKRUM: I don't think you can even say it in terms of a percentage. We sit down and we kick the ideas around. If one of us has an idea the other one doesn't like, he generally is very loud about saying why he doesn't like it. I personally think it's a 50-50 equal partnership. I'm not going to claim that I contribute the majority of the ideas. I have this sort of handicap: I will come up with ideas for situations or characters, "I would like to do a story with a character who does *this*," but I can't think up a story. That takes a lot of practice and work, and if I had been doing it for years I'm sure I could do it. I would like to try my hand at

Starbolt of the Shi'ar Imperial Guard attacks Wolverine. [*X-Men* #107 Claremont-Cockrum-Green]

writing someday, but I'm not in practice right now and I don't claim to be the world's greatest writer or anything like that. Chris is able to come up with coherent storylines and he's willing to take my suggested direction and make up a story around it, and I don't see either partner being an inferior. It's a working team.

SANDERSON: *What do you think Chris's strengths are as a writer? Or weaknesses?*

COCKRUM: I think he tells a good strong story. Everybody raves about how he writes strong women. I agree except I'm not entirely certain that he might write more than one strong woman. Everybody of similar types of characters tends to talk alike, for instance, sometimes. Obviously people don't all talk alike or use the same expressions or language or whatever, and his strong female characters all tend to be very similar in their strengths, I think. Those would be weaknesses if that's the case. I think he's a good storyteller and I enjoy his dialogue and ability to write characters from different ethnic backgrounds, for instance. He knows accents and dialects.

SANDERSON: *Chris's Banshee has been accused of being an Irish stereotype*

COCKRUM: I suppose he is, but in this country, what do most of the readers know of the Irish other than what they see in media?

SANDERSON: *If they've seen* Going My Way, *say?*

COCKRUM: Well [*laughter*], I don't quite mean that Banshee should be Barry Fitzgerald or anything like that.

SANDERSON: *Well, it could be argued that if all people see of a certain ethnic group in the media are stereotypes...*

COCKRUM: They're not going to believe anything else, really.

SANDERSON: *It's more incumbent upon a writer to break a stereotype*

COCKRUM: I suppose maybe that's true too.

SANDERSON: *On the other hand, where do you draw the line between trying to summon up the personality traits there are in the people of a particular country a d falling into stereotype?*

COCKRUM: I think in the case of people like the Banshee, he's trying to demonstrate, "This is Irish!" without having to go into great detail or great explanations. It's kind of a Shooterism I suppose, where everything has to be self-explanatory at a glance without requiring two sentences of explanation.

SANDERSON: *So how would you sum that up? Do you think he is doing stereotypes, or there are stereotypes do you think it's bad?*

COCKRUM: I suppose he does to a degree, in a case like Banshee, or example, I would say yeah, he does, but Banshee has always been a stereotype. He was a caricature to start with

SANDERSON: *And at least Moira doesn't wear kilts She just has the accent. And she's not cheap.*

COCKRUM: [*laughter*] How do you know she's not cheap?

SANDERSON: *Well, she's got this huge Mutant Research Center*

COCKRUM: Maybe Xavier paid for it. Well, Ororo is not a stereotype.

SANDERSON: *No. Who do you think the artists in comics or elsewhere are who have influenced you most?*

COCKRUM: At one time or another, nearly everyone has. that's a tough question to answer. I've been influenced by, at one time or another, Kirby, Buscema at Marvel, and Murphy Anderson, Joe Kubert, Will Eisner, although you don't really see much Eisner in my stuff—it's more of an appreciation than an actual use—people like Reed Crandall—I still love the old Reed Crandall *Blackhawks*—Gil Kane, a lot of people.

SANDERSON: *Are there any scenes in* X-Men *you look upon as being particularly influenced by any of these old artists?*

COCKRUM: I don't know if I could go so far as to say that. I don't sit down and consciously do a swipe of anybody, but sometimes I can sit down and see the genesis of what I've done I was pretty strongly in-

fluenced, I guess, by Joe Kubert when I was in high school and early college, because I loved *Hawkman*, got a lot of influence from that, and later on Gil Kane, because I loved *Green Lantern* and *The Atom*...

SANDERSON: Hawkman *has a redheaded woman in it too.*

COCKRUM: Yeah. And if you ever saw *Detective* #500, the Hawkman story in there, there was the sexiest shot of Shiera I've ever seen of anybody in there. Wow! [*laughter*]

SANDERSON: *She was pretty good all through it Quite a change from the old days*

COCKRUM: Yeah And of course I worked as Murphy Anderson's assistant for a year, so I was pretty heavily influenced by him too, especially in terms of inking He taught me a lot about inking. I've been influenced by Hal Foster to a degree, because Murphy told me to go study Foster's inking style...

SANDERSON: *Well, that may have helped with the Banshee's castle, I suppose.*

COCKRUM: Oh yeah, it did, I've got all the hardbound *Prince Valiant* books.

SANDERSON: *What was the hardest sequence you ever did in* X-Men *to visualize?*

COCKRUM: Gack.

SANDERSON: *Or one of the hardest ones. Does it all come easy?*

COCKRUM: That's a hard question. No, it doesn't all come easy. Some of it's pretty tough.

SANDERSON: *For example, John was saying that the scenes I thought were going to be hard, the real spectacular scenes, were fairly easy to him compared to—one scene that gave him trouble, he said, was just the X-Men sitting around the kitchen trying to figure out what to do.*

COCKRUM: Sometimes that is tough. [pause] Having a whole crowd of people sitting around not doing much of everything can be tougher than anything else, because you want it to look natural, so in spite of the fact that they're not doing much of anything they're all doing something and if possible you want to keep whatever it is they're doing, or not doing, in character. That thing is kind of rough. As for single specific things that were tough to do, nothing springs to mind.

SANDERSON: *In your first* X-Men *issues, there were some sequences I found particularly impressive, particularly the launching of the rocketship that takes the X-Men up to the Sentinels' space station [#99] and later, when the shuttlecraft comes into the airport very small and then "boom!" lands explosively, bounces a little, and lands in the sea [#101]. You must have a real taste for that kind of spectacular...*

COCKRUM: I like spectacular stuff. I think that's one of the reasons why I mentioned earlier that I really

The Imperial Guard's Oracle has a good laugh. [*X-Men* #107: Claremont-Cockrum-Green]

disliked the issue I just finished [#148], and I suppose that's one of the reasons why: it's a very ordinary story. Nothing happens [*laughter*].

SANDERSON: *Except maybe Storm reacting to discotheques*

COCKRUM: She doesn't even do much of that. The most fun I had in it is Kitty crawling under the table changing to her X-Men costume and Storm saying "Get out of there!" [*laughter*].

SANDERSON: *Do you agree that Kitty should look like a young Sigourney Weaver?*

COCKRUM: Well [*laughter*], Chris has got this thing for Sigourney Weaver. I like her too.

SANDERSON: *So does John; it's his idea, apparently.*

COCKRUM: I don't know. I'm not against it, I guess. I'm having some troubles figuring out exactly what Kitty looks like, how big she is, this, that, and the other thing, especially if they want her to be a young Sigourney Weaver. I just read an article that said when she was 13 she was 5'10", which is the height she is now, and [*laughter*] that would make her almost as tall as Storm and...

SANDERSON: *Towering over Wolverine. How tall do you figure Wolverine is?*

COCKRUM: I always thought 5'4". I think John thought he was taller than that, I'm not sure. We get a big disparity, because Nightcrawler is as tall as I am, he just doesn't stand up straight.

SANDERSON: *In other words, he's six feet*

COCKRUM: No, no, he's 5'10", and he bends over a bit, but that puts him up here and John always had him

HURTIN' FROM THAT FLAME BLAST, BUT I CAN'T LET IT BOTHER ME. I GOTTA KEEP TRIMMIN' THE ODDS.
AN' WHAT THE HEY, THIS FIGHT'S TOO GOOD T' MISS!
YOU! FUR-FACE! YEAH, I'M TALKIN' T' YOU, BUB!

Wolverine confronts Fang of the Imperial Guard. [*X-Men* #107: Claremont-Cockrum-Green]

down here Must have been about three and a half feet tall.

SANDERSON: *Which issue is your favorite of the ones you've drawn, and why?*

COCKRUM: That's hard to say too. I'll tell you, in some respects I'm most pleased with #145, the first of my new ones, because it was like coming out of a tunnel into the daylight after the *Star Trek* crap and all that. I'm a *Star Trek* fan; I got the book because I asked for it, and there was nothing but garbage the whole time. [*sighs*]

SANDERSON: *Do you mean the stuff you did, or the writing, the limitations imposed by the* Trek *people?*

COCKRUM: No, no... For one thing, Klaus [Janson] and I don't make a happy combination, I think. I like Klaus's inking on other people but I don't think it works on me. Most of the stories were dumb. The whole thing was a big flop, I thought, and the way I wound up getting back on *The X-Men*—this is really rather strange...

SANDERSON: *Well, first of all, why did you leave in the first place?*

COCKRUM: I was tired Every issue seemed to have more characters in it...

SANDERSON: *Not a trend that has stopped at all.*

COCKRUM: [*laughter*] If you look at my last one, #107, there were 54 specific single characters, separate identities...

SANDERSON: *Well, it's unlikely you're going to hit that number again.*

COCKRUM: I hope not. But I was being driven up the wall. I was tired and I just couldn't take it and I needed a rest; that's why I got off It wasn't because I disliked the book or anything.

SANDERSON: *You'd been doing it for a number of years*

COCKRUM: Actually, only a couple of years, but it sure seemed longer. Maybe it was three, I'm not sure. I did about fourteen issues.

SANDERSON: *So even if it hadn't gone monthly, you would have left anyway*

COCKRUM: Yeah. Well, at the time I couldn't have handled it monthly. I'm amazed that I've lasted so long this time [*laughter*] but it's easier somehow now.

SANDERSON: *So how did you get back on the book? First of all, there was John announcing that he was leaving for the* FF

COCKRUM: Al Milgrom has got this book going, *Marvel Fanfare*, and there was a Mike Golden story with Spider-Man and the Angel. I think it started out to be a *Team-Up*...

SANDERSON: *Which Chris wrote. Set in the Savage Land*

COCKRUM: And he decided he wanted to have an X-Men follow-up for that and just kind of idly he asked me if I wanted to do it, and I think I was about ready to do some more X-Men stuff and I said, "Yeah," so lo and behold, he gave me the plot, I started doing it, and not only was it easy to do, it was actually fun, as opposed to the misery of the *Star Trek* stuff. This was on a Saturday; I called up, I had already got ten pages of this done, and was moving right along, and I was really enjoying it, and I called up Chris and said, "You know, if Byrne ever wants to get off the book, I think I'd like to have it back." And that following Monday Byrne announced he was leaving the book. It was really strange timing, you know So I got it. I had already put in my bid. There were no hassles, no doubts, or anything. "He's off, you got it."

SANDERSON: *Do you have any worries about reactions to your* X-Men *from people who started reading the book when John was doing it? Because you do have very different styles*

COCKRUM: Yeah. Well, I suppose it does occur to me, but I'm not going to worry about it much Either they like it or they don't.

SANDERSON: *But do you feel there's any pressure riding on you because* X-Men *is the number one fan book and has been for so long? Does this put any pressure on you?*

COCKRUM: I suppose it should. It doesn't. I'm too easy-going about it. Chris tells me that people upstairs expect sales to drop off sooner or later and I say, "The hell with upstairs."

SANDERSON: *Does it surprise you that* The X-Men *has become such a fad in fandom? Does it deserve to*

PLEASANT DREAMS, MEIN HERR.
HE CAN ACTUALLY CHANGE HIS PHYSICAL SHAPE -- THAT'S PHANTASTISCH! WUNDERBAR!
ZAK!
I WISH I COULD DO THAT. IT'S TOO BAD WE'LL NEVER GET TO MEET AS FRIENDS.

Nightcrawler kayos the Imperial Guard's version of Chameleon Boy. [*X-Men* #107: Claremont-Cockrum-Green]

be? Is it really as good as people make it out to be?

COCKRUM: I don't know.

SANDERSON: *Why do you think the fad has arisen?*

COCKRUM: [*laughter*] I don't know. That's a good question. I don't know what's at the basis of it. We thought we were creating a good bunch of characters and a pretty respectably good book, when I was first on it, and by the time I left the sales were coming up to a pretty respectable level. They hadn't taken off and become this maniac thing it is now, but quite frankly I don't know what to attribute its success to.

SANDERSON: *Do you think there may be any factor it has in common with the Legion's popularity?*

COCKRUM: Well, yeah, in some respects, the group books like that tend to do well

SANDERSON: The Champions *didn't do well. There are lots of groups that haven't.*

COCKRUM: Well, there's group books and there's shit, let's face it. *Champions* were always garbage as far as I'm concerned, but *The New Teen Titans* over at DC now are beginning to take off like that now.

SANDERSON: *Why do you think people seem very much interested in a well-done group book?*

COCKRUM: There's more interest in a group that's well done. You've got more interesting characters. If you're into super-powers you've got a wider range of things that people can do. Both the X-Men and the Teen Titans and of course originally the Legion tended to go for cosmic adventures...

SANDERSON: *Because nothing else really suits a group that's so big and so powerful.*

COCKRUM: Unfortunately, the Legion was limited by the silliness of their stories, but I still say somebody with a firm base in science fiction could take over the Legion and give them some direction...

SANDERSON: *Would you like to see* The X-Men *become an SF book since you were doing such SF-oriented stories during your first tenure there?*

COCKRUM: I have a tendency to go in that direction. I'm not sure whether I would like to make it an official direction for the book, but since I lean that way it will tend to have some SF direction to it. After we finished with Magneto in #150, we're going to go out and finish off the Starjammers storyline, so that's certainly in that direction.

SANDERSON: *Now, how did the Starjammers come about?*

COCKRUM: Well, that came about because it was an idea I had for a series, and I could never interest the powers-that-be into letting me have a couple of issues of *Spotlight* or *Premiere* to do the thing in, so I asked Chris if we could work it into *The X-Men*, and we did. It's unfortunate that we did. I wish I had retained the characters until later and maybe maintained some ownership on them.

SANDERSON: *How did the idea come about to make Corsair into Scott's father?*

COCKRUM: I think that was another one of those "Hey wouldn't it be neat if's." We do a lot of those [*laughter*].

SANDERSON: *Do you regret this at all, or do you think it's a bad idea? Scott no longer has a normal midwestern background...*

COCKRUM: No, he doesn't. I suppose it's unfortunate to have it tied in to *The X-Men*, if it ever was to become a series of its own. But we can certainly ignore the tie-in. There's no need to ever bring the X-Men into it if it ever took off and became its own series.

SANDERSON: *Which you'd still like to see happen, I take it?*

COCKRUM: Sort of, yeah. The only reservation I have about that is that I have several other series ideas that I would like to do something with too, and I can't possibly do them all. The Starjammers date back to 1973

SANDERSON: *Were they developed pretty much each with his own individual name and appearance that he has now?*

COCKRUM: Yeah, except for Hepzibah, who was a last-minute addition.

SANDERSON: *Why is Hepzibah named after a Walt Kelly character?*

COCKRUM: [*laughter*] Because she's a lady skunk! Chris says she's a cat but she looks like a skunk to me. That's not actually her name, but I don't know what her real name is. It's just that Corsair calls her Hepzibah.

SANDERSON: *Because he used to read* Pogo.

COCKRUM: Yeah, sure.

SANDERSON: *Well, Corsair is once again, I guess, one of your swashbuckler characters.*

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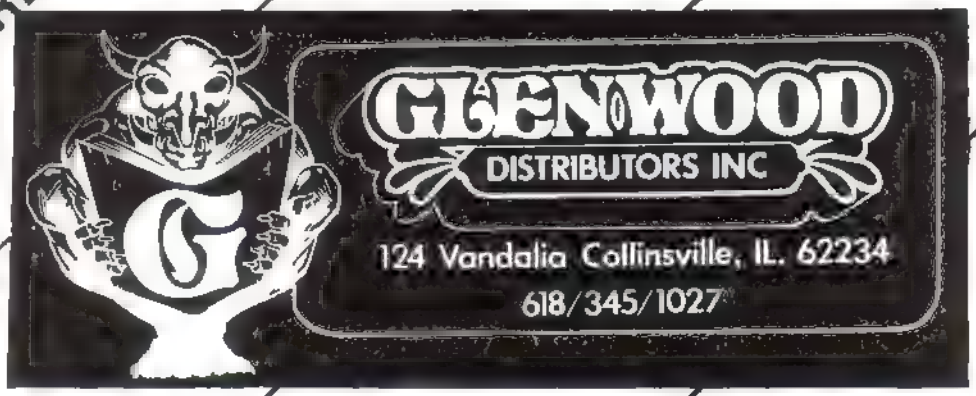

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YOU MAY DESTROY THE EARTH TODAY, BUT IF THE X-MEN FAIL--TOMORROW THE UNIVERSE WILL DIE!

Phoenix's first opponent Galactus's former herald, Firelord. [*X-Men* #105 Claremont-Cockrum-Layton]

COCKRUM: He's Errol Flynn.
SANDERSON: *And Hepzibah is—well, another version of your catwoman characters, only she's a skunk Maybe she's like the cats in those Pepe le Pew cartoons, with a stripe of paint or something...*
COCKRUM: We always sort of figured that instead of being smelly like a skunk that—
SANDERSON: *She allured people with her scent?*
COCKRUM: Yeah, pheromones or whatever you call them.
SANDERSON: *How about the other two? Where did they come from? Why a cyborg and why a big lizard?*
COCKRUM: The lizard's name is Ch'od By the way, it's a Hebrew sort of a *ch*. Another one of my fondnesses is that I am a big *Creature from the Black Lagoon* freak. So that's my homage to the creature from the Black Lagoon I suppose. As for Raza...
SANDERSON: *Is he a cyborg?*
COCKRUM: Yeah, he's a cyborg. It just struck me that we needed a mean son-of-a-bitch and I dress a mean son-of-a-bitch and that's what he is.
SANDERSON: *What exactly do they do? They were at odds with the Empire, although presumably no longer.*
COCKRUM: Well, the Empress and Empire Central are not entirely in control of everything that happens in the Empire. It sprawls.
SANDERSON: *Hard to run a whole galaxy.*
COCKRUM: Yeah, how do you run the whole thing? You can't see everything that's going on. Corsair and Mrs. Corsair—whatever her name is [laughter]—
SANDERSON: *Mrs. Summers*
COCKRUM: They were picked up in a slave raid. The official policy of the Empire is against slavery, but elements of the Empire engage in it anyway, besides which the empress's brother was a very decadent sort, and he personally murdered Mrs. Summers when she wouldn't put out as it were, ahem... anyhow, that is the source of Corsair's animosity toward the Empire Some of the others were either prisoners, political or otherwise, and between them they broke out of whatever they were being held prisoner in and stole the Starjammer, some of them having been involved in the designing of the ship and knowing how it ran and all that—
SANDERSON: *And what do they do? Are they space pirates, basically?*
COCKRUM: I think they're more like vigilante do-gooders and they've crossed the paths of the Empire enough times to aggravate the Empire regardless of the fact that mostly they're do-gooders.
SANDERSON: *Now I suppose they have Lilandra's approval but there still are outposts with people loyal to her brother that they can fight.*
COCKRUM: I gather that they're not too friendly even with a lot of people that they're on the same side of. I think the up-and-coming storyline has to do with Lilandra being kidnaped, in a *Prisoner of Zenda* sort of affair, and there being enough supporters of her brother still around. The people who are her sup-

porters are forced to enlist the X-Men and the Starjammers in trying to get the empress free

SANDERSON: *Why did you decide to give her this bird motif? Not to mention a bug motif for her spaceship?*

COCKRUM: Because I like to design motifs. And a long time before she ever appeared in the book, I did this character drawing, and whenever I do a character drawing, most of the time I have no idea what I'm going to use it for. I just do neat characters, and whenever Chris sees them, invariably his response is, "That's great, let's use it in the book!!" That's what happened I did this great character shot of her, feathers and all, and that was his response. A lot of the stuff we did in the early days we didn't exactly know where we were going when we started it. With Xavier's dream of the grand space battle with the bug ships and the other ones, I don't think we really knew where we were headed yet.

SANDERSON: *Or that he was going to fall in love with her.*

COCKRUM: During that battle, the little scoutship broke away and then escaped, and we didn't show who was in it with any clarity, but we did know it was her. Chris and I knew it was her, but we didn't know where we were headed.

SANDERSON: *I think even her name changed.*

COCKRUM: Yeah, it did. Well that's her full name now: Lilandra Narimoni. It's an anagram of two former girlfriends of mine [*laughter*].

SANDERSON: *Now, the Starjammers were brought in and we really only get to know Corsair at all before they all disappeared from the book again. If you had stayed with the book would they all have stuck around longer?*

COCKRUM: Yeah, because we would have gone ahead and finished the storyline, I think, the origin and how Christopher Summers [Corsair] got out in the middle of space...

SANDERSON: *So when you brought in the Starjammers, you didn't know at that point you were going to be leaving the book?*

COCKRUM: No, I wouldn't have brought them in if I hadn't—Jeez, you know, it's funny...

SANDERSON: *Because you were saying that you were thinking of leaving the book six months before you actually did.*

COCKRUM: Yeah, you're right. I must have been ambivalent about whether I was leaving the book or not. If I was entirely convinced I was leaving the book I wouldn't have brought them in, I think.

SANDERSON: *How about the Imperial Guard? Can you give us a key as to who's who? The leader, Gladiator, is supposed to be Superboy...?*

COCKRUM: Superboy, sure.

SANDERSON: *Who's the one who was laughing at the way Wolverine got his costume burned off?*

COCKRUM: That was Oracle: that's who Saturn Girl is And of course Fang was Timber Wolf.

SANDERSON: *And there's the Chameleon Boy clone*

COCKRUM: Yeah, what the hell did they call him —Hobgoblin. And—

SANDERSON: *There's the leader, Gladiator. Coming right from the Philip Wylie novel Superman was based on.*

COCKRUM: That's why we did that.

SANDERSON: *Although he looks a bit like Omac.*

COCKRUM: Well, somebody or other theorized that Omac is a descendent of Superman, and I think that was another reason for that. And also the fact that Gladiator has what looks like a Grecian helmet motif Seems to me the fiery character, Starbolt, was Starboy, and—

SANDERSON: *There's been twice now in one of your issues that Wolverine's gotten his costume burned off*

COCKRUM: It's fun [*laughter*]. Wolverine's a fun person to cause inconvenience to.

SANDERSON: *Byrne has said that he finally decided that Nightcrawler is a good character to play practical jokes on and he was trying to do that in the Wendigo story.*

COCKRUM: Actually, I thought that was kind of cute, scaring him and him jumping up on Wolverine. That was funny.

SANDERSON: *Who came up with the idea of putting the Legion in* The X-Men *under the name of Imperial Guard, and was it intended as a joke or as an homage or as both?*

COCKRUM: It was more of a joke than anything else, I think. I'm not sure, it was probably my doing, but it was also my downfall, sort of, having to draw that many people did me in. But there was some talk about DC doing a similar sort of thing in the Legion. It had gone so far as to have Paul Levitz talking about doing it.

SANDERSON: *Just like the* Invaders/Freedom Fighters *crossover.*

COCKRUM: But then they didn't do it. It would have been fun.

SANDERSON: *I often like the jokes that you put in the story. For example, here was the Phoenix/Firelord battle [#105] in which we sight this familiar-looking foursome plotting a story, but the most spectacular was, of course, the ice-skating rink in Rockefeller Center [#98]. How many people did you put in that? There's Clark Kent and Lois Lane, there's Julius Schwartz...*

COCKRUM: Carmine Infantino was there, too, but he

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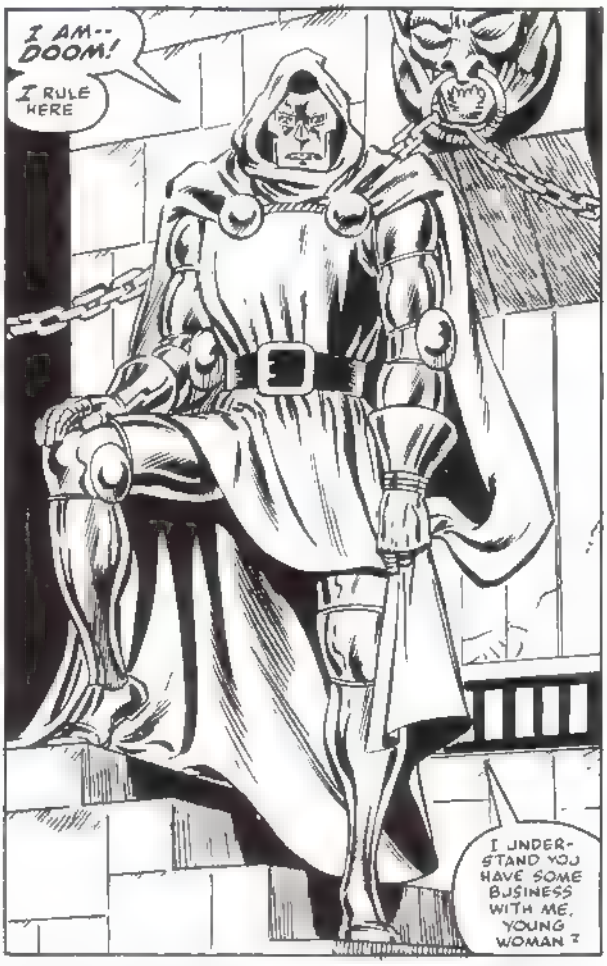
The X-Men in civilian guise, Matt Murdock, and Nick Fury at Rockefeller Center on Christmas, all shockingly oblivious to the fact that Dr. Doom is ice skating in the background [*X-Men* #98. Claremont-Cockrum-Grainger]



Doctor Doom, Marvel's most notorious super-villain. [*X-Men* #145: Claremont-Cockrum-Rubinstein]

was covered by copy.

SANDERSON: *There's Stan Lee and Jack Kirby that's pretty clear—and there is, although most people don't notice, Doctor Doom ice skating in the background—I think Marshall Rogers noticed because at the end of* Detectives Inc. *we see Bugs Bunny skating at Rockefeller Center.*

COCKRUM: However, a lot of people think that Howard the Duck is there and he's not.

SANDERSON: *Why do they think that?*

COCKRUM: There's a stumpy character on the far side of the rink on the edge that was incompletely inked and some people think it looks like Howard, and it wasn't Howard

SANDERSON: *Nick Fury was there and Matt Murdock, I think. .*

COCKRUM: Yeah.

SANDERSON: *Who else?*

COCKRUM: I was there along with my first wife—we were still married at the time—and Richard Nixon was there but he was covered by copy He was wearing a hat with earflaps down, all you could see was his nose [*laughter*]. But it was obviously the Nixon nose.

SANDERSON: *Number One of the Secret Empire is not dead.*

COCKRUM: [*laughter*]

SANDERSON: *Which stories in the old* X-Men *series did you like best? There seems to be a general consensus so far in that everybody I've talked to so far seems to like the [Neal] Adams stories.*

COCKRUM: I like those too.

SANDERSON: *And John likes the original Kirby issues, although Chris and Len don't. Nobody seems to like the Werner Roth/Roy Thomas issues, so...*

COCKRUM: Having just reread most of them, I'm fairly up on them. I like the Kirby ones too. I like the Neal ones although I'm not too thrilled about the Living Pharaoh as a character [*laughter*] but I think those were the best of them, Neal and Roy's and Stan and Jack's.

SANDERSON: *Do you have any particular favorite stories, ones that you think capture what the* X-Men *should be like now?*

COCKRUM: You mean from the original *X-Men*? [*pause*] Well, I liked the Sauron stories [#60-61]. I liked some of the Sentinel stories...

SANDERSON: *Any particular reason why you picked these out?*

COCKRUM: Sauron because I think it was visually a very good villain. The X-Men were notorious for having wimpy, stupid villains...

SANDERSON: *Like the Locust, or Mekano [#24,36].*

COCKRUM: Yep, and what the heck was the Mexican villain who set himself up as...

SANDERSON: *El Tigre, later known as Kukulcan [#25-26].*

COCKRUM: Yeah. Dumb stuff. [*laughter*]

SANDERSON: *And why the Sentinels? Do you mean the original Sentinels story [#14-16] or the Adams Sentinels [#57-59]?*

COCKRUM: Actually, I like the Adams Sentinels better, but I like the Kirby Sentinels as well...

SANDERSON: *Even though they were both mutant menace stories.*

COCKRUM: Yeah, they were mutant menace stories, but they were done well. They really had our characters on the ropes. They were running for their lives. Tough menaces to beat. And even though I don't like the mutant menace thing because I think it's inconsistent with the overall view of super-powered characters, I think that they were definitely well-handled stories.

SANDERSON: *Who was that Council of the Chosen who were behind the Sentinels story around #100? Chris says occasionally these days that they were going to be the Hellfire Club, although he has yet to establish that in the book.*

YOU LOOK AFTER SPRITE STORM I'LL HANDLE CALIBAN
WILL ..WILL YOU KILL, CALIBAN?
NO. THAT WAS NEVER OUR INTENT
YOU'RE A MUTANT, AREN'T YOU CALIBAN? THAT'S WHAT YOU MEANT WHEN YOU SAID WE WERE ALL THE "SAME"
CALIBAN DOES NOT UNDERSTAND YOUR WORDS HE FELT YOUR PRESENCE IN HIS MIND, IN HIS HEART, LIKE A GREAT SHINING LIGHT
IT DREW HIM OUT OF HIS UNDERWORLD HOME. HE COULD NOT HELP HIMSELF
CALIBAN DID NOT WISH TO CAUSE ANYONE HARM. HE THOUGHT HE WAS UNIQUE BUT WHEN HE SENSED OTHERS LIKE HIMSELF, THE THOUGHT OF RETURNING TO THE UNDERWORLD, OF LIVING--FOREVER--ALONE..
.. BECAME UNBEARABLE.
CALIBAN IS SORRY
AS ARE WE. CALIBAN WE ARE OF ONE KIND--AS MUTANTS. COME WITH US, WE CAN OFFER A TRUE HOME, SAFETY--FRIENDSHIP.
WE HAVE ALL ACTED HASTILY TONIGHT BUT THERE IS STILL TIME TO BEGIN AFRESH

Spider-Woman captures the lonely, deformed mutant Caliban. [*X-Men* #148· Claremont-Cockrum-Rubinstein]

COCKRUM: I think that's who he intends for that to be. My intent was entirely different.
SANDERSON: *They look like the Secret Empire...*
COCKRUM: Well, it wasn't. I intended for them to be a group of people who will be the antagonists in another series I hope to be selling Marvel, so I can't go into it any further than that, but since they didn't get used in *The X-Men* they will get used in this other thing...
SANDERSON: *Under a different name, probably.*
COCKRUM: But I was trying to steer Chris into a storyline which I don't think he really ever particularly cared for and probably doesn't even remember, so it's going to stay in my storyline for this other series
SANDERSON: *You have a character named Caliban in #148 Did this have anything to do with the Caliban that John Byrne was almost going to put in* the X-Men?
COCKRUM: I don't know what John's looks like. I don't think I've ever seen it. Mine is a kind of a ragman that lives in the sewers of New York City. He's a mutant and his ability seems to be able to search out other mutants, so he's a walking Cerebro.
SANDERSON: *That's John's Caliban's power.*
COCKRUM: Well, Chris passed it along to me, and the storyline in #148 is that he senses other people like him nearby and goes to say hello and of course it's misunderstood and big fight and all that crap
SANDERSON: *Is there any chance he might join the group?*
COCKRUM: Doubtful. He likes it too well down in the sewer
SANDERSON: *John's looks completely inhuman. I believe he's even four-legged. Yours is much more human.*
COCKRUM: He's definitely humanoid. He runs around looking like a bargain basement Lamont Cranston most of the time, in a raggedy cape and hat and stuff like that.
SANDERSON: *What do you think is the difference between* The X-Men *when you were first on the book and* The X-Men *today, not only in terms of how you draw, but also in terms of stories perhaps and also in terms of*

characterization?
COCKRUM: Well, there was less characterization when I was doing the book because lately we were first finding out who these characters were. Sometimes we didn't even have time to try and find out who they were. There's a book, as it goes along, it gathers a background of detail and information and continuity and we didn't have—except for what we chose to borrow from the original run of *X-Men* we didn't have any of that the first time I was doing the book, and there's a great deal of background continuity and detail that we have to draw from or pay attention to know in this second run, and I suppose I'm having a certain degree of problem retaining visual personality traits that Byrne would have put in, for instance, because either I'm not aware of them or it's not the way I would do it...
SANDERSON: *Such as? Are there particular cases?*
COCKRUM: Specifics don't come to mind, but Chris mentioned that he's getting letters saying that the characters are not reacting the same or behaving the same as they would have if Byrne had done them and I am assuming that that's my doing rather than Chris's doing. He doesn't say that there's a great deal of letters complaining or anything like that; it's just that people have made that statement.
SANDERSON: *The only one I've heard him complain about is Colossus yawning at the meeting when he's told that his sister's been kidnaped [#145]*
COCKRUM: Yeah, well, that's my fault, because the kidnap panel was one panel thrown away several pages earlier and it was just like in my head and out again and by the time I got to that page it wasn't that I was thinking about people being told that their families had been kidnaped, I was thinking about people being woken up in the middle of the night and sitting there going "ga-a-a-ahh." And if I had been thinking on my toes a little bit better I think I would have had him react differently, but like I say, the kidnap panel was just a one-panel throwaway thing and it didn't make any impression on me. They're right about that one, but it's too late now.
SANDERSON: *Are there any differences between the way you used to draw the X-Men and the way you draw them today, or do you think you've pretty much picked up where you left off?*
COCKRUM: No, I think my drawing skills have improved, for one thing, and I think that this run is better drawn
SANDERSON: *Any particular way, or just overall?*
COCKRUM: Overall, although I've learned a lot more about people's faces in the interim, having for one thing had to try to draw actual people in *Star Trek* and having to work from photographs and things like that.
SANDERSON: *So you think your faces look more realistic or more expressive?*
COCKRUM: Maybe a little bit of each. And I notice for instance the way I draw Storm's face is slightly different from what I used to do. I'm doing a specific nose instead of a comic book woman's nose now, and things like that. At a casual glance a person is not going to notice it, but if he starts analyzing it, he might see that kind of thing. It's just because I'm more aware of what makes up a person's face than before.
SANDERSON: *Was it fun drawing Doctor Doom?*
COCKRUM: Yeah. I have always liked Doctor Doom. He's a grand villain, or a villain in the grand manner.
SANDERSON: *You were trying to emphasize grandeur then?*
COCKRUM: To a degree.
SANDERSON: *There's one close-up of him that looks very Kirby-esque.*
COCKRUM: I don't know which one that is.
SANDERSON: *I was thinking of the one where he's toasting her over dinner and thinking, "I'm going to get you." [#145]*
COCKRUM: [*laughter*] I was using Kirby Dooms as reference. Joe Rubinstein was using Wally Wood Dooms for reference on the inking, I believe, which is all right, I liked Wood's Dooms too, but I was using basic Kirbys for the pencilling.
SANDERSON: *So—what do you hope to be doing in the future with the X-Men? The Starjammers are returning...*
COCKRUM: Oh, definitely. We've got a lot of things we'd like to do. Starjammers, I'm not sure how long that's going to take, three or four issues possibly, let's see—[*laughter*] the minute you start mentioning all the things you're going to do your mind goes blank. Well, introduction of some new characters possibly. We'll be developing Kitty and Jeez, I don't know what else. We've talked about a lot of things. As a matter of fact, we sat down and rough-plotted out nine issues, and now I'm not sure what they are [*laughter*]. You'll just have to see what happens.
SANDERSON: *And how long do you think you might stay on the book this time? For the indefinite future?*
COCKRUM: I'd like to. If I'm around until the 20th anniversary—is that number 200?
SANDERSON: *That's different, I think. The 20th anniversary would be about two or three years from now.*
COCKRUM: We have possibly big developments for that one, at least we've talked about possibly big developments.
SANDERSON: *But you'd like to stay on at least for that.*
COCKRUM: I'd like to stay on for the next several years at least

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Interview with CHRIS CLAREMONT

The "new" X-Men series has seen its editors and artists come and go (and sometimes come back). The most constant creative influence on the series has therefore been Chris Claremont, who has scripted every "new" X-Men issue and annual beginning with the very first regular issue, 94, and plotted or co-plotted virtually all of them. Moreover, he has written stories in which one or more of the X-Men appear for Spider-Woman, Marvel Team-Up, Bizarre Adventures, Iron Fist, *the 1981* Avengers Annual, *and* Marvel Fanfare, *and is now preparing to write a companion* X-Men *series featuring a new team of young mutants.*

Among Claremont's other series at Marvel have been Iron Fist *(on which he first worked with John Byrne),* Ms. Marvel, Marvel Team-Up, Power Man/Iron Fist, Star-Lord, John Carter, Warlord of Mars, Doctor Strange, Man-Thing, *and* War Is Hell, *as well as* Daughters of the Dragon *tales for* Deadly Hands of Kung Fu *and* Bizarre Adventures. *Currently he is writing* Spider-Woman *in addition to his work with the X-Men, and is working on a forthcoming* Conan *story. Together with British artist John Bolton, Claremont has created Marada the She-Wolf, a swordswoman during the early days of the Roman Empire, whose first stories have appeared in Marvel's* Epic Illustrated.

Claremont also works as a science fiction writer. His short story "Psimed" appeared in the April, 1973 issue of The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction. *Another of his stories, "The Last of the Dragons," will appear in 1982 in the second volume of Ace Books' anthology* Elsewhere.

This is the first part of an interview that was conducted in February, 1981; the conclusion will appear in the next volume. The entire interview was transcribed by Gary Groth and Kim Thompson, and was edited by Chris Claremont and myself.

—P S

SANDERSON: *How did you first become involved with* The X Men?

CLAREMONT: Well, back in 1969 I was essentially a gofer at the [Marvel] office. It was a field period between the fall and spring semesters at my college—Bard College—during which students were expected to go out and get a job in their major field, or something akin to their major field. Mine was political theory/international relations and acting. There weren't many acting jobs that spring. There weren't many political jobs available for someone from a radical-liberal college. Nixon having just taken office, no one really wanted a job in that sphere of operations. So I fell into the other thing I did, which was writing. Through my parents I ended up getting a job as a gofer at Marvel. They knew someone who knew someone, who knew someone, who knew someone, who knew Stan [Lee]. Basically, what I did was answer fan mail. There was a lot less fan mail then than there is now. This was winter of 1968-'69.

While I was there the first of Neal [Adams]'s issues came in make-ready. It was the Living Pharaoh story [*X-Men* #56]. I took one look at it and nearly died, it

THANKS, PAL, BUT NO THANKS.
THIS GUY'S MINE.
MEIN GOTT.
SNIKT
HE'S LIKE THE GREAT CATS ON THE VELDT. WHEN HE STRIKES, THERE IS NO MERCY IN HIM.
COAST IS CLEAR-- FOLLOW ME!

Wolverine's infamous murder of the guard in the Savage Land. [*X-Men* #116· Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

was so good. It was like, oh wow! Oh God! My little heart went pitter-patter. Roy [Thomas] was wrapping up the Sentinels story, and we were talking in the office one day, just in general terms. He was looking for a rationale to get rid of the Sentinels. As I recall he didn't think the X-Men could defeat them. There were too many of them and they were too powerful. What he wanted Scott to do was to outwit them, or to use their own logic against them. He wanted him to find some key that could be utilized to that end. With my typically dilettantish and probably inaccurate view of science and generic theories, it seemed to so as I understood it, all primary mutation was the result of solar radiation. Just the gradual seepage of it through the Van Allen belts. The only way to stop unwanted mutation was to destroy the sun. The Sentinels would be arrogant enough to try and stupid enough not to realize that it would cook their goose. They evidently had no self-survival program. "Let's go to the sun!" Zoop! It seemed like a good idea to Roy so he incorporated it into the story. The Sentinels story that was in *Avengers* 102, was done from my plot. Roy embellished it somewhat. I used Ayers Rock in Australia as their base. I had the Avengers just going in to trash 'em. Roy threw in all the stuff with Larry Trask, and the Vision's qualms about the Grim Reaper being his brother and such.

SANDERSON: *And the business about Trask's visions of the future.*

CLAREMONT: Yes. That was all Roy's, beyond my basic idea of the Sentinels coming back from the sun.

SANDERSON: *Coming to sterilize man.*

CLAREMONT: Yeah. They would trigger a gradual solar flare that would sterilize everybody. Then they could genetically engineer their own race. It was the second story I plotted; the first was a *Hulk* story.

SANDERSON: *It also had to do with the sun.*

CLAREMONT: I was in a very solar mood at that time. It was the early '70s. I was still in school and I got a credit and a couple of bucks. Roy came out to the reception area and slipped me some money. It was easier than going through Marvel's bookkeeping. That's where it started.

SANDERSON: *Did you always like* The X-Men *as a series?*

CLAREMONT: I enjoyed Roy [Thomas] and Neal [Adams]'s *X-Men*. And I thought that the earlier stuff were some of the silliest books I'd ever read.

SANDERSON: *Why is that?*

CLAREMONT: I have to qualify things because what I've discovered over the years is that, say, ten years ago there were things that I despised or was not particularly interested in. For example John Buscema's inking himself, old Kubert stuff. It wasn't my type. And what has happened in the last 10 years is that I have really come to appreciate Kubert's inking.

The same goes for a lot of the stuff that Stan [Lee] and Jack [Kirby] did. One of the conflicts, subconscious conflicts, between me and Jim Shooter is that for example, Jim's concept of the Golden Age of Marvel Comics is generally the first twenty issues of any book that Stan and Jack did—the first twelve issues of *The X-Men*, the first twelve to twenty issues of the *FF*, *Thor*—anything that those two laid out. Whereas for me the Golden Age, the age of Marvel that lit my fire and got me hooked forever began with *FF* #48. That's when my collection began in earnest. My *FF* collection dates from #48 My *Thor* collection dates almost continuously from about the same time. Because I dis-

covered Kirby on the *FF* and I thought "What else does this guy do?" and I found *Thor* and went wow! And then I would pick up an occasional *Daredevil* or *Avengers*.

SANDERSON: *And the Thomas-Adams* X-Men *were for you the use of the equivalent of the* FF *from the mid-forties on.*

CLAREMONT: It was a synthesis of visual and literary styles whereas in the early stuff what you had was a very crude visual and literary style. Where everything is nailed down five minutes from Sunday. Stan himself stopped doing it after that

SANDERSON: *And you're not just referring to the Lee and Kirby issues but to the Thomas-Roth issues as well?*

CLAREMONT: Roy's early issues on *The X-Men*—well, let me put it this way—I never actually read *The X-Men* until I was working for Marvel and Neal's stuff started coming out. Now, as writer of the book, I've read the entire run. Roy was just starting out when he wrote *The X-Men*. I don't think it was Roy's best work by a long shot The art didn't entrance me at all Werner's [Roth] stuff was very competent and that was it I bought the Steranko stories and that was it. It never really interested me until *The X-Men* actually became my book. That was an accident too. I was working as Len Wein's associate editor. Len and Dave Cockrum were evolving the new *X-Men* concept. And they'd be sitting in Len's office, which is now Shooter's office, plotting it. I would be sitting there just outside proofreading. I'd wander in and say "Can I listen?" and they'd say "Sure." They'd evolved the whole first issue of *Giant Size* [*X-Men* #1] except the ending. They needed a way to get rid of Krakoa utilizing the powers of the X-Men. I was thinking about it and I thought, well, we've got Lorna Dane, who has since become Polaris, here, and her power is magnetism, so why don't you just have her slice across the magnetic lines of force, the gravimetric lines of force? And then the speed of the Earth's rotation on its axis would just squirt it up and away it would just go. In a sense Krakoa would stay in place while the Earth just rotated around its axis and revolved around the sun away from it. And off he goes into the wild blue yonder. It would be like taking a bar of soap and watching it go *Pfffttt*! right into the air. Len thought it was a great idea and Dave came up with the visuals and that was that. Then Len had to resign as editor, pretty much. When he resigned he took on the top four books: *Hulk*, *Thor*, *FF* and *Spidey*. As I had worked on *The X-Men* and as I was familiar with it and he respected my writing, if not my plotting, he offered me the title. I took it.

I don't think any of us dreamed it would turn into what it's turned into It's one of Len's fond comments

MAGNIFICENT, MY LOVE.
WORRY NOT, JASON.
HAD THE BLACK QUEEN STRUCK TO KILL, THERE WOULD BE NOTHING LEFT OF THE LAD BUT ASHES.
BUT-- THE HELLFIRE CLUB WANTS THE X-MEN ALIVE, IS CYCLOPS--?

Jean Grey as the Hellfire Club's Black Queen. [*X-Men* #132 Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

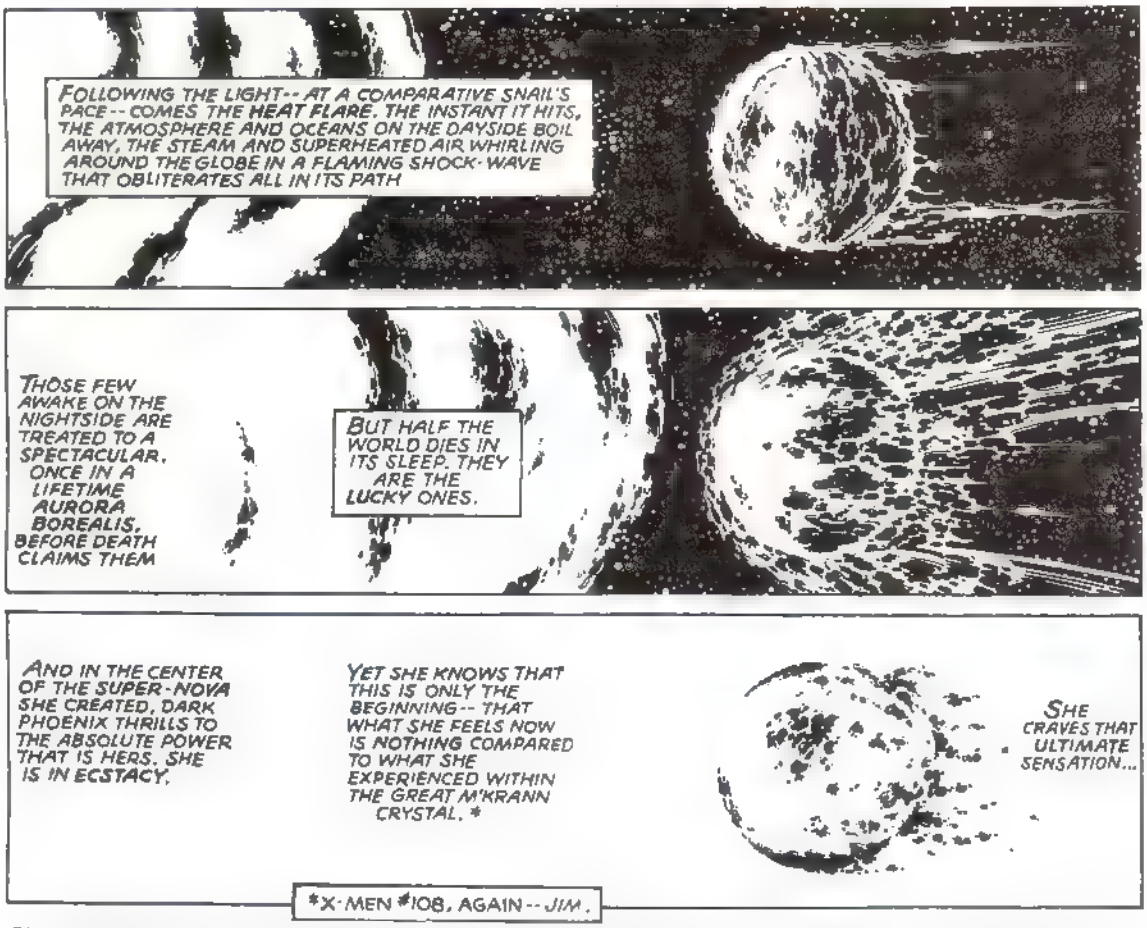
that as a fan, just as a pure reader of *The X-Men*, he has loved the book for the last fifty-odd issues. As the co-creator he wants to wring my neck, because I essentially threw out almost every character conception he had. (Take Nightcrawler, for example.) It's very strange. Steve Englehart and I were working in the same direction at the same time, both of us hating the concept of the bitter, tormented, ugly person. In the Beast's case when he got blue and hairy you might say that he'd been relatively nice looking as Hank McCoy and now he was this misanthropic thing. With Nightcrawler it struck me that this man has been this way since he was born. This wasn't a mutation that appeared when he hit thirteen. It seemed to me that no human being could survive twenty odd years of being like that. It would be like the ultimate extension of being black. You just can't survive if all you're aware of is that I am this color and I'm a minority and I'm hated and I'm persecuted because of what I am. I can never do anything. I walk into a restaurant and people scream—if they let me in the door at all. so you only have two alternatives: you learn to live with what you are, you accept it, perhaps even enjoy it, or you end your life. There really is no other alternative, short of going totally round the bend, catatonic, and withdrawing into yourself into a fantasy, which is essentially the same thing as killing yourself except that your physical instru-

EVEN MUTANTS CANNOT COMPREHEND OUR SENSE OF LOGIC, A3!
LOGIC... YES...NOW I SEE...
...DEFEAT THEM...THRU LOGIC...!
DEFEAT? DEFEAT WHOM, JUDGE ...WHOM?
SCOTT... SOMETHING'S WRONG!
TOO MUCH ENERGY... BUILDING UP INSIDE ME...!
YOUR VIOLENCE WAS, FOR THE MOMENT, UNWARRANTED!
OUR FIRST LAW IS TO PROTECT HUMANS...
NOT TO BATTLE MUTANTS!
DID YOU HEAR THAT, SENTINELS?
THEN, YOU SHALL PRECEDE US IN OBLIVION, MUTANT...
...AS PER OUR LAST ORDERS!
EVEN YOU CAN'T HALT THE PROCESS NOW!
ONE MUTANT WILL DESTROY US ALL...BECAUSE OF YOU!
AGAIN THAT UNHOLY LOGIC! AND YET...
WAIT!
SENTINEL... ANSWER ME THIS BEFORE YOU DESTROY ME!
ARE YOU NOT PROGRAMMED TO PROTECT HUMAN LIFE FROM MUTANTS?
WE ARE!
BUT, ALL LIFE FORMS...EVEN HUMANS...ARE THE RESULT OF MUTATION!
THUS, YOU CAN ONLY PROTECT HUMAN LIFE...
...BY FINDING AND NEUTRALIZING THE SOURCE OF THAT MUTATION!
DO YOU HEAR ME, SENTINEL?
SCOTT... I...
17

Cyclops (disguised as Quicksilver) tries logic on the Sentinels...

TOO MANY LIVES AT STAKE...!
MAYBE I CAN DO...WHAT NO OUTSIDE SOURCE CAN...
...BY DESTROYING MYSELF... BEFORE I DESTROY OTHERS!
BLAM!
ALEX...!
ASSEMBLE AT ONCE...
...FOR THE ULTIMATE RESOLUTION OF THE MUTANT QUESTION!
GOOD LORD... ALEX!!
ATTENTION, SENTINELS... THIS IS NUMBER TWO...!
HOLD IT, ALEX! DON'T RACE TOWARDS THAT CONTROL PANEL!
THAT APPARATUS IS DELICATE! IT--
TO THAT PLACE WHERE LEADS THE SIREN CALL OF LOGIC!
WE MUST SEEK OUT THE SOURCE OF MUTANT-INDUCING RADIATION...
...THOUGH OUR QUEST LEAD US TO THE MOST INACCESSIBLE PLACE OF ALL...
RRRRRRR
...YOU WILL SWIFTLY RECOVER, HUMAN!
BUT, I MUST LEAVE NOW...!
LEAVE?
BUT... LEAVE TO GO WHERE..?
...TO THE VERY HEART OF THE RAGING SUN ITSELF!
18

...with surprising results [*X Men* #59· Thomas-Adams-Palmer]


FOLLOWING THE LIGHT-- AT A COMPARATIVE SNAIL'S PACE-- COMES THE HEAT FLARE. THE INSTANT IT HITS, THE ATMOSPHERE AND OCEANS ON THE DAYSIDE BOIL AWAY, THE STEAM AND SUPERHEATED AIR WHIRLING AROUND THE GLOBE IN A FLAMING SHOCK-WAVE THAT OBLITERATES ALL IN ITS PATH
THOSE FEW AWAKE ON THE NIGHTSIDE ARE TREATED TO A SPECTACULAR, ONCE IN A LIFETIME AURORA BOREALIS, BEFORE DEATH CLAIMS THEM
BUT HALF THE WORLD DIES IN ITS SLEEP. THEY ARE THE LUCKY ONES.
AND IN THE CENTER OF THE SUPER-NOVA SHE CREATED, DARK PHOENIX THRILLS TO THE ABSOLUTE POWER THAT IS HERS. SHE IS IN ECSTACY.
YET SHE KNOWS THAT THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING-- THAT WHAT SHE FEELS NOW IS NOTHING COMPARED TO WHAT SHE EXPERIENCED WITHIN THE GREAT M'KRANN CRYSTAL. *
SHE CRAVES THAT ULTIMATE SENSATION...
*X-MEN #108, AGAIN-- JIM.

Claremont, Byrne, and Austin horrifyingly present the obliteration of a planet by the supernova Dark Phoenix created. [*X-Men* #135]

ment still functions. So I went for the former. I said Nightcrawler's come to terms with himself at a very early age. He knows who he is. He accepts it. He likes it.

SANDERSON: *And became a showman capitalizing on it.*

CLAREMONT: Well, that was his environment. That's why I evolved the circus environment because a circus, like theater, is a lot looser about physical aberrations. One is more easily accepted for one's physical differences in a circus—*for* one's differences as opposed to in spite of one's differences. And it seemed like a nice thing to play off.

SANDERSON: *But it's not just that Nightcrawler accepts it, he revels in it. Even now that he's in* X-Men *he still does these circus tricks when he's fighting.*

CLAREMONT: Well, why not? Dave and I meshed very well conceptually. We both thought along the same lines in certain respects. Dave had the concept of Nightcrawler as Errol Flynn. I really enjoyed that. I thought that was nice. I liked him being a swashbuckler. Swords, and derring-do and Nightcrawler's the name and damsel saving my game."

SANDERSON: *Very much playing at it.*

CLAREMONT: Yeah. Douglas Fairbanks is his idol, and Errol Flynn

SANDERSON: *So Cockrum didn't have this feeling of wanting to wring your neck because you were changing Len's concepts. Or were they his concepts as well?*

CLAREMONT: They were. He created most of the characters: Nightcrawler, Storm, Colossus. The thing was that at that point they were half-formed concepts. You would understand if you had read Bill Mantlo's fill-in story which was done roughly about the time I took over *The X-Men*, the Bob Brown story that became #106, which I totally rewrote. There are maybe two lines in the entire book which are Bill's It wasn't his fault. The thing was that he plotted that roughly when I was writing #96, and I'll be the first to admit that I didn't have a handle on what the book was and who the characters were solidly until #98. I consider #94 through 97 almost the breaking-in period. I was trying to figure who these people were, what they did, how they

reacted to each other—the who, what, where, when, and why of *The X-Men*. As usual, when I was given the book there was a schedule problem. I was leaving for England in a couple of months. As a matter of fact, I wrote #96 full script while I was in England. I'll never do something like that again because it's probably the worst issue of *The X-Men* that's ever been written.

SANDERSON: *Number 96 being the first of the N'garai stories.*

CLAREMONT: Yes. Kierrok the creep. "Weak!" to quote a mutual friend. So what Dave and I did over the next six months was evolve the characters, evolve the characterizations. Who is Storm? Who is Wolverine? For example, Wolverine, we decided, was the kind of guy who would sit there in a living room and just idly carve on an antique rosewood table. We threw the panel into #96. It wasn't very successful; there was too much happening in the panel. I was still learning my craft as a writer and a plotter so it was astonishing to me that the book was as successful as it was that early. And to add insult to injury we had the hundredth issue coming up in the six issues, which meant that we had to build to a major story line right off the bat. It was a given that I had to start the story that would culminate in #100. So I had to know by #98 exactly what was going on and possibly to set it up, which I started doing in #96 with Lang and the Sentinels. Then, for no reason whatsoever, Dave, at the end of #97, threw in that shot of the bug people monitoring Lang, who was monitoring the X-Men. And just to show you where our colorists were at, the guy who colored that issue colored Lang's screen. So we had the X-Men, then we have Lang watching the X-Men on a color screen, then we have the Bug commander watching Lang on a black and white screen. And I pointed out that this is not a successful operation, you can't do that. You've got to have it the other way. And they kinda went "Oh yeah, right, you're right, gee, sorry about that."

SANDERSON: *You had to script #94 and #95 over Len's plot.*

CLAREMONT: Issue #94 and #95 were what had been originally intended to be *Giant-Size X-Men* #2. Dave had pencilled about a third of it, up to the moment they arrived at the mountain and what he and I did was sit down and break it down and mesh it all in. But yeah, it was pretty much Len's plot. If I had had my druthers, if I'd known what I was going to do on the book, if I'd had time, I would have not killed Thunderbird.

SANDERSON: *That early, or at all?*

CLAREMONT: Probably at all. If he'd not worked in *The X-Men*, I would have written him out of the book—broken his leg in fifteen places or something. You could understand why Len made the decision to do it because as he understood it he was writing a giant-size, 34-page quarterly book. There was no way that you could maintain the issue to issue continuity and suspense of a monthly. And there was no real way he could take the time to build up a character. It would just take too long. A twenty issue story which would take me twenty months would take him five years, which was unacceptable. So he decided rather than take the time to build up this character and have the reader feel an emotional connection and have a stake in the character's existence, he would go for shock value and just his first mission, *Boom!* [claps hands] the guy dies. Also if I'd known how to write the book at the time I wouldn't have written Jean out. That was a mistake I think...

Oh? FOR LOVE OF THE X-MEN, YOU SACRIFICED YOUR LIFE. FOR LOVE OF ME, YOU RESURRECTED YOURSELF FOR LOVE OF THE WHOLE UNIVERSE, YOU ALMOST DIED A SECOND TIME TO SAVE IT.
KNOW NOTHING OF LOVE?! JEAN, YOU ARE LOVE!

Cyclops reminds Dark Phoenix of her true personality as Jean Grey. [*X-Men* #136: Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

SANDERSON: *All the old X-Men just pick up and leave very fast. "We are bored here, we are leaving."*

CLAREMONT: Right. Even more to the point, in #97 when I brought Jean back, I went for the joke when Jean is meeting Xavier at the airport and she says "Hey! Watch out for great white sharks." I'd just seen *Jaws*. It was a case of "Hey, what a great line!" Whereas what I should have done is taken that panel to establish where Jean has been and what she's been doing and the fact that she hasn't been apart from the X-Men. That she's been making her own life in New York with Misty Knight, rooming with Misty and doing whatever she's been doing and that she's been seeing

Scott. That they have been dating a lot

SANDERSON: *Whereas, when she left in #94, it seemed as if she was walking out on him for ever.*

CLAREMONT: Yeah, and that was a mistake. There are innumerable inconsistencies: characterization inconsistencies, structural inconsistencies vis a vis the first half dozen issues and what has come since, simply because that was the shakedown. Dave and I were kind of flexing our wings trying to figure out what we wanted to do, how we wanted to do it.

SANDERSON: *Well, such as?*

CLAREMONT: Oh, Wolverine for example. The whole idea of him jumping on people and cutting them up. Nightcrawler laughs at him in #95, 96 and he goes after him with his claws. But Wolverine has been through so many arbitrarily demanded changes in the last five years that it's getting a little crazy. The Hawkeye of the X-Men. But it's just a matter of how relationships are dealt with because they weren't fully formed at that point. The interaction was awkward. Things were left unsaid that should have been said. Jean and Scott, for example.

SANDERSON: *The fact that they had continued seeing each other*

CLAREMONT: Yeah. And that was a critical element because a lot of criticism that has been levelled at the book since comes out of things that were established in those first issues that I threw out later on. I would decide, hell, this isn't working. This is stupid. Goodbye. Also, I have a tendency, for better or ill, not to show everything.

Jason Wyngarde, a.k.a. Mastermind, before and after. [*X-Men* #134: Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

SHE ISN'T. HER TIME-SLIPS ARE ONLY AN ILLUSION...
...CAUSED BY A MAN JEAN KNOWS AS JASON WYNGARDE.
BUT JASON WYNGARDE IS MERELY A FAÇADE. HE IS ACTUALLY...
...MASTERMIND--THE MUTANT MASTER OF ILLUSION!

SANDERSON: *An example might be the statement in #100 that there was this deep friendship between Jean and Storm which had never really been shown*

CLAREMONT: Yes

SANDERSON: *It must have evolved very quickly.*

CLAREMONT: Again, that was something that was intended to be established in #97 at the airport with Storm's rescue of Jean, that whole interplay. Because again I was settling in and I wasn't sure where I wanted to go with it, I didn't set it up and in hindsight I should have set it up. In hindsight if I had those first six issues to do over again, given the same plots even, I would do structurally different things: different emphases, different ways of doing the scene. It's because the line in #100 does come out of left field. And yet why not: It's impossible to show everything.

SANDERSON: *And the book was a bi-monthly.*

CLAREMONT: We never dealt with it as a bi-monthly. We always worked on it as if it was going to come out every week. In a conceptual sense we would set things up—the infinite subplots, the infinite cliff-hangers Denny [O'Neil] and I are having arguments now over *Spider-Woman* because I'm dealing with *Spider-Woman* the same way. He has his very definite ideas and I have very definite opposing ideas. It's a typical conflict.

But, again, the other thing that also has to be remembered is that from #94 to #100 the book existed in an editorial structure that was essentially laissez faire. For better or worse we could do what we wanted. With a little guidance but not the extremely aggressive, interfering, arbitrary structure that you have today. Editors were much less likely to put their stamp on a book. They were much more likely to trust the writer and artist to follow their own instincts successfully. As a consequence Dave and I were able to find the book's voice, our own voice on the book. I don't think we could do that today. We would have Jim Shooter with his set of parameters, we would have the editor with his or her set of parameters There are all these "rules" that are not supposed to apply to every story but which somehow end up applying to almost every story, that we are expected to abide by.

So the book evolved in a much looser framework than exists today, and I think it's better for it. I think that the shakedown created an awkward situation, some awkward skeletons in the book's collective closet But it was a valuable time for Dave and me because we got to the point where we started to understand who these people were and why they were and how they interacted and who the main characters of the story were. And again, Len had intended Colossus to be the star of the book and Storm to be the girl, and Nightcrawler to be the tormented demon and Wolverine to be essen-

THE SAME GOES FOR THE MUTANT KNOWN ONLY AS... WOLVERINE.
--YAAAHHH!!
PUSH HIM TOO FAR AND HE GOES MAD-- AND WHEN HE DOES, HE KILLS.
CASE IN POINT:
TEN YEARS O' PSYCHO-TRAINING, O' HYPNOTISM, O' DRUG THERAPY, TEN YEARS O' PRAYIN'...
...AN' I CUT HIM TO PIECES WITHOUT A THOUGHT.
NOTHING CHANGES, PROF-- I THOUGHT I'D LEARNED TO CONTROL MYSELF--I GUESS I WAS WRONG-- AN' YA WANTA KNOW SOMETHIN' FUNNY--
--I'M GLAD!

Wolverine's early opinion of his killer instincts. [*X-Men* #96· Claremont-Cockrum-Grainger]

tially the Johnny Storm-Hawkeye-type hothead.

SANDERSON: *But not a dangerous hothead.*

CLAREMONT: No. Well, not a homicidal hothead, certainly not. Also Len felt evidently, that the claws came out of the gloves. [*laughter*]

SANDERSON: *That the claws were phony?*

CLAREMONT: The claws came out of the housings in the glove, you see. Not knowing that, Dave and I thought well, let's have them come out of the back of his hands. So we did. See, there's a case of a positive editorial interference—uh, comment. When I wrote #98, Wolverine pops the claws out of the back of his hand. I just did it. Marv [Wolfman] says, "Wait a minute, Chris, shouldn't the other X-Men react to this?" I went, "Oh yeah, I guess they should." [*laughter*] So I wrote the scene where Banshee goes, "My god, the claws come out of the back of your hand! You never told us!" "You never asked." And that crystallized Wolverine's response to everything. He does not volunteer information to anyone. For example: "You speak Japanese?" "Yep." "You never told me." "You never asked." [*screaming*] "*Why should we, for Chrissake?!*" Again, why should they? Why should he tell them?

SANDERSON: *Do you think that if you had kept Thunderbird around, that he would have become redundant because of the way Wolverine evolved?*

CLAREMONT: Well, he was redundant from the beginning. In Thunderbird, you had a super-strong, super-fast man with the ability to track anything anywhere.

SANDERSON: *And a mean personality*

CLAREMONT: And a mean personality. Wolverine, you had basically the same. Wolverine may not be as fast, but he had the claws, and he had the mean personality. On the other hand, Thunderbird had a much nicer costume—a much more *sensible* costume, anyway. So it's hard to say, and again, one has to wonder: would his characterization as established by Len have remained constant with me? I don't know. No one else's did—except Storm, really. She was a goddess then and she stayed one. I cannot really understand some critics' assessment of her as a hypocritical prig.

SANDERSON: *Is that because she says she has sworn an oath against killing but nevertheless tolerates Wolverine's presence?*

CLAREMONT: I can see where they might think that,

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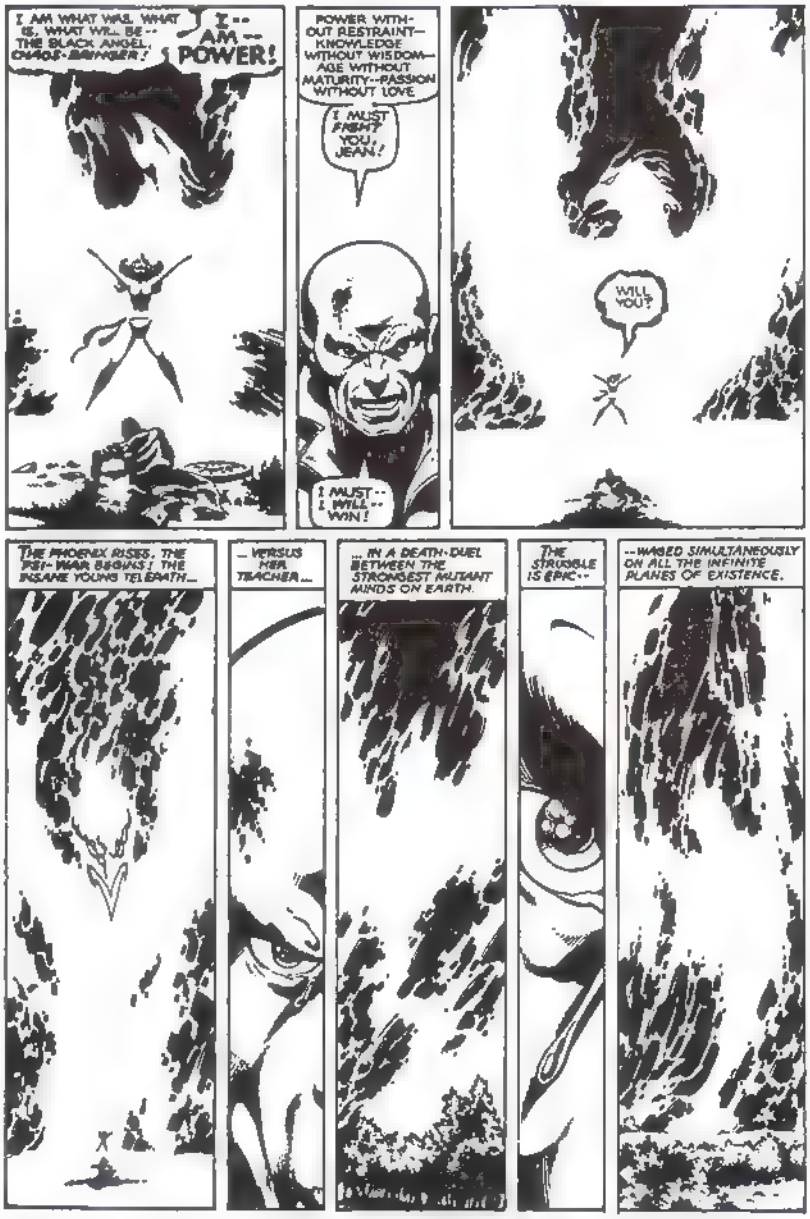
THE DAY THE X-MEN DIED!


I AM WHAT WAS, WHAT IS, WHAT WILL BE -- THE BLACK ANGEL, CHAOS-BRINGER!
I -- AM -- POWER!
POWER WITHOUT RESTRAINT -- KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT WISDOM -- AGE WITHOUT MATURITY -- PASSION WITHOUT LOVE
I MUST FIGHT YOU, JEAN!
I MUST -- I WILL -- WIN!
WILL YOU?
THE PHOENIX RISES. THE PSI-WAR BEGINS! THE INSANE YOUNG TELEPATH...
-- VERSUS HER TEACHER...
...IN A DEATH-DUEL BETWEEN THE STRONGEST MUTANT MINDS ON EARTH.
THE STRUGGLE IS EPIC --
--WAGED SIMULTANEOUSLY ON ALL THE INFINITE PLANES OF EXISTENCE.

Xavier engages in psychic war with Dark Phoenix (*X-Men* #136 Claremont-Byrne-Austin)

but that was why I specifically threw in the line in the Savage Land scene [#116] about the lions on the veldt: she does not or did not view him as a man, as a being like herself She thought of him as a lion who walked on two feet You do not criticize a lion for going out and killing a wildebeest. That's what it does. By the same token, at that time, I was evolving a characterization of Wolverine, which is essentially stated in #140, where he essentially tells Nightcrawler, "If a man comes at me with fists, I'll meet him with fists. But, if they draw a gun or threaten someone I'm protecting, they've crossed the line." There's a line that John Wayne says in *The Shootist*; he's speaking to Ron Howard, he's saying essentially he will not do this, I won't be this, I do not do these things to others and I require it of them in return. And that essentially sums up his character. But, that is essentially Wolverine's character. He exists. There is a line around him and if you cross that line, you must take the consequences.

SANDERSON: *And you've said that as a former soldier and spy, he does not have the inhibitions against killing that other people might have.*

CLAREMONT: No. He has no more inhibition against killing than Nick Fury does. The body count in *Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos* had to be seen to be believed. I mean, the commandos would walk into a room full of Germans and you would see smoking tommy-guns. Are you going to tell me that those Germans only got wounded?

Going back to the Savage Land scene, [#116], as originally constructed in the plot, it was specifically set up in such a way that it was a war time situation. You have Storm, Wolverine, and Nightcrawler on the ground. You had the guard. You had an airborne patrol of pterodactyl riders a hundred feet overhead. The slightest outcry would have brought them down and would have defeated the X-Men. The man had to be taken out swiftly, silently, and permanently. They could not afford to tie him up Maybe he could wake up and go "mmmm-mhmhhhmmm." The point was, Storm wold have tried to do something Storm would have tried to take him alive. Nightcrawler could not teleport to the attack because of the fact that teleporting involves sound, light, and smell. They might have heard it, seen it, smelled it. It came down to Wolverine, and for Wolverine it's a killing situation. He has no qualms about it because he knows that the man would have no qualms about killing him if it came to that.

SANDERSON: *Well, isn't this a bit of an after-the-fact justification because you have said that it was Byrne and Stern who decided to imply in that scene that Wolverine...*

CLAREMONT: No. No, no, no, no. I'm talking about the original plot. I'm talking about the original plot I put down on paper in which I said this is how the scene is

JEAN? SHE'S SO STILL. I'M NOT EVEN SURE SHE'S ALIVE. I WANT HER TO LIVE--
--BUT WHAT IF SHE HASN'T CHANGED? WHAT IF SHE'S STILL DARK PHOENIX?!
I'LL LOVE HER JUST THE SAME.
FOR BETTER, WORSE, RICHER, POORER, SICKNESS, HEALTH-- TILL DEATH DO US PART.
HI.
H-HI, YOURSELF.
IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D SAY THOSE THOUGHTS I JUST PICKED UP SOUNDED LIKE A PROPOSAL.
THEY DID, DIDN'T THEY?
WHAT DO YOU SAY, RED?
I SAY, YES!

After Xavier assisted by Jean herself, succeeds in restoring her to normal Scott pops the question. [*X-Men* #126: Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

structured. John [Byrne] chose not to do it that way He did not establish the threat the pterodactyl riders flying guard patrols, who would have been alerted by the man's outcries I saw the way John had done it, we had no time to change it, and I, unfortunately, come from an ethic in comics that says when you're working off a plot, you essentially deal with the pencils you get If you want something specific, you write a full script Jim Shooter and Roger Stern are far more likely to order stuff re-pencilled, redone, re-this, re-that, than I I will try to find a way to write around it unless it's absolutely necessary, because, to me, out of the ethic I was trained under, the art is pretty much sacrosanct, partly because no one would order an artist to change anything when I was there, when I was starting out Also, given the scene, there was no way to have it redone without restructuring the whole rest of the book See, in many cases, when there were artistic conflicts between what I had wanted as the writer and the person who wrote the plot and what John had interpreted from that plot, the change would not, could not have been done in the two panels that were allowed It would have involved a structural change, it would have affected the entire rest of the book. Or so it seemed to me So, I would generally just not do it

In this case, I left out the "snikt" [indicating Wolverine unsheathed his claws]. The inference was there; if you were a reader you could infer either Wolverine went up and killed the guy, or went up and just knocked him out real hard. Roger and John talked about it and without consulting me, the sound effect was put in. The first I saw of it was when I saw the make-ready. And Roger said as editor he overruled me, and I was furious, but there was nothing I could do about it. It was done In a sense that relates specifically to the Phoenix story because what you have at Marvel is an editorial situation...well, what you have in comics is a situation in which the writer is not a master of his or her own fate. The editor is the arbiter of what goes into a book Arbiter is an excellent term to describe it because many of the decisions are arbitrary, and worse, last minute. Again, moving ahead somewhat to the Dark Phoenix story...we had a situation in which John and I knew we were both treading on thin ice with the storyline. We were stretching things as far as we thought we could go in terms of what we could persuade Marvel to accept. And we both felt this was a storyline that had to be cleared at every step of the way Well, Roger [Stern] at that point had gone off staff in the middle of the storyline. Jim Salicrup had come in and taken over, so here I am giving plots to Salicrup, saying, "If there's any question, ask me; if there's any

problem, would you please show these to Jim [Shooter] and check with him. We are dealing with some heavy concepts here. Jean is killing an entire planet." And Jim never showed them to Shooter. Shooter told Jim he trusted his judgment. Well, as it turns out, Salicrup approved everything—

SANDERSON: *But when Shooter saw the make-ready for #135 ..*

CLAREMONT: ...He popped a cork. And that was exactly what we'd been afraid of all along.

SANDERSON: *And Shooter felt he couldn't allow the character to get away with destroying an inhabited planet.*

CLAREMONT: Again, it comes down to a difference in points of view. What I was trying to write in the Phoenix story is a story about forgiveness, about mercy, about how the greatest mass-murderer in the history of the cosmos can, and in certain circumstances, should be forgiven, and the difference between Lilandra's race—this incredibly old, incredibly mature race, that rules a galaxy—and ours is that hers had that capacity to look at Phoenix or Jean, to judge the situation impartially and err on the side of forgiveness.

SANDERSON: *Would it be an error?*

CLAREMONT: Well, to choose the side of forgiveness. And that's why I very specifically said all through every speech Lilandra made relating to Phoenix, it was always "Phoenix must die," "Phoenix must be neutralized," "Phoenix must be dealt with." Because she understood that there were two separate beings, that one could view Phoenix without viewing Jean, that they were bound but not inseparable. It was not that Phoenix was evil, it was just that Jean suddenly found herself coming out of a situation where she had been sucked up into this Black Queen personality, this somewhat cruel, decadent trip. Went directly from that to a situation where her slightest wish, her slightest thought could be manifested as reality. Essentially she is akin to Dr Morbius in *Forbidden Planet*, except that in his case only his subconscious was in touch with the Krell Miracle Machine. His conscious mind could not draw on its power, his subconscious could. In her case, both conscious and subconscious could draw on, literally, this infinite power she possessed.

SANDERSON: *But, it was the repressed subconscious, the dark side, that was in control.*

CLAREMONT: Well, at first, because that was where she was coming out of. But the point, the idea was that it was a tidal wave sweeping up the shore and then back down again, and when it swept down again was when she reasserted her control. The point is that she was not ready for it. That's why she says at the end of #137, "I will have to remain in total control of every

A distraught Jean before her trial by combat for her acts as Dark Phoenix. [*X-Men* #137: Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

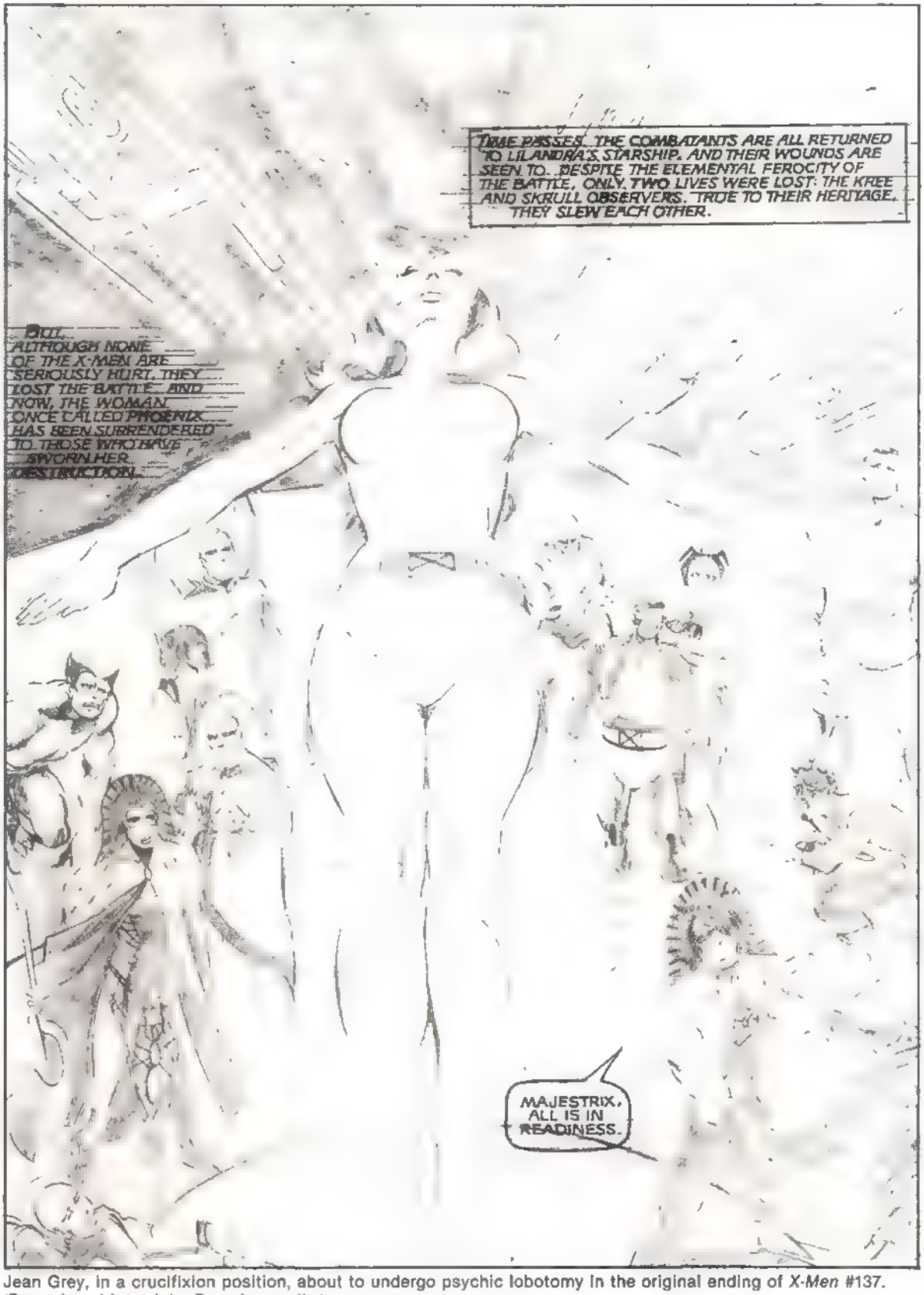
conscious and subconscious thought for every second of the rest of my immortal life." Not every *waking* second, every split second she would have to be in absolute control of every facet of her mind.

SANDERSON: *She could not even go to sleep, because she'd be dreaming.*

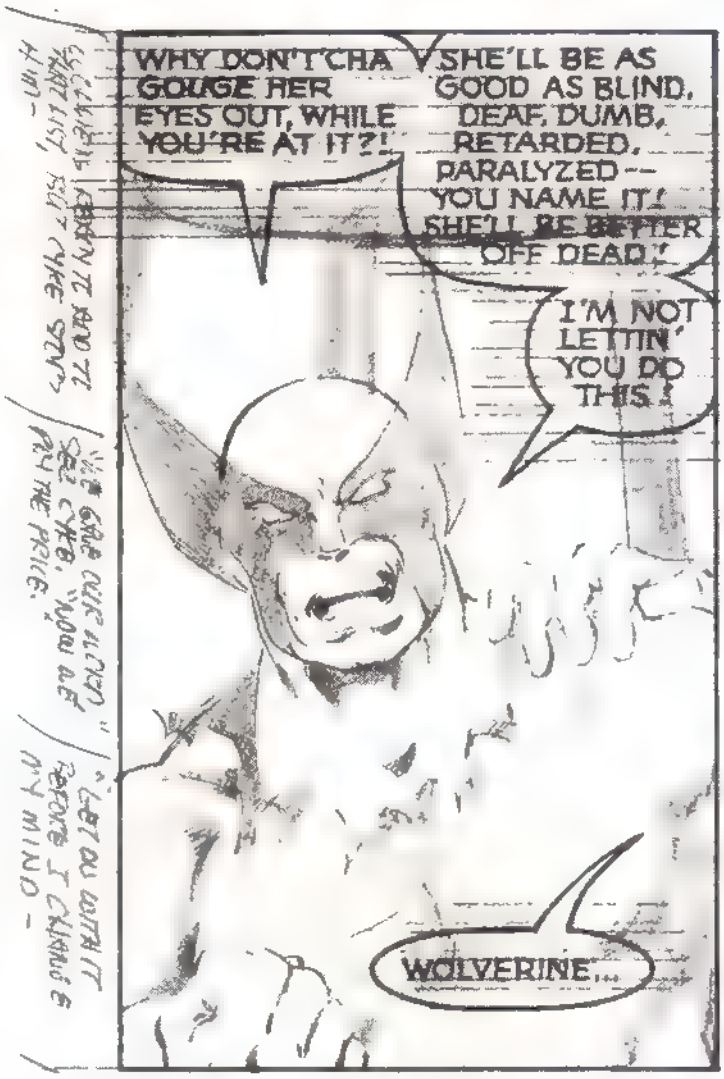
CLAREMONT: Well, if she went to sleep, she would have to control her dreams. I mean, she's literally so powerful that if she said, "Oh, go to hell!"—*pfffttt!*—the guy disappears and goes to hell. She just, simply, on an evolutionary standpoint, was not ready to handle that. It would be akin to Dr. Strange walking into the Ancient One's house, saying, "Hi, my hands are busted." "Oh, you have great potential as a sorcerer." BOOM! "You are now Sorcerer Supreme of Earth." right off the bat. The point was that there are certain things that Phoenix exemplified the terrible glory of human potential, glory because of the potential, terrible because of what that potential can do in the hands of an infant. It would be akin to giving an infant or a child a nuclear bomb to play with, or controls of every nuclear bomb on Earth to play with. It required things of her that she was not physically, mentally, emotionally, evolutionarily capable of giving.

SANDERSON: *It was not just that she had too much power to handle. You see, the key to judging the story seems to be whether or not one believes she had that. Jean could be held morally responsible for the actions she committed as Dark Phoenix. Was she able, during the rush of power she experienced during #135 and #136, to make the conscious choice not to destroy the planet, or not to destroy the starship, or not to fight the X-Men, or was she completely in the grip of the darker side of her personality?*

CLAREMONT: No, she couldn't. I mean, she didn't


TIME PASSES. THE COMBATANTS ARE ALL RETURNED TO LILANDRA'S STARSHIP, AND THEIR WOUNDS ARE SEEN TO. DESPITE THE ELEMENTAL FEROCITY OF THE BATTLE, ONLY TWO LIVES WERE LOST: THE KREE AND SKRULL OBSERVERS. TRUE TO THEIR HERITAGE, THEY SLEW EACH OTHER.
BUT, ALTHOUGH NONE OF THE X-MEN ARE SERIOUSLY HURT, THEY LOST THE BATTLE. AND NOW, THE WOMAN ONCE CALLED PHOENIX HAS BEEN SURRENDERED TO THOSE WHO HAVE SWORN HER DESTRUCTION.
MAJESTRIX, ALL IS IN READINESS.

Jean Grey, in a crucifixion position, about to undergo psychic lobotomy in the original ending of *X-Men* #137. (Reproduced from John Byrne's pencils.)


WHY DON'T'CHA GOUGE HER EYES OUT, WHILE YOU'RE AT IT?!
SHE'LL BE AS GOOD AS BLIND, DEAF, DUMB, RETARDED, PARALYZED -- YOU NAME IT! SHE'LL BE BETTER OFF DEAD!
I'M NOT LETTIN' YOU DO THIS!
WOLVERINE...

Wolverine protests the plans to destroy Jean's powers in the original version of *X-Men* #137. (From John Byrne's pencils for the original ending of *X-Men* #137.)

care. There was no awareness of right and wrong. She was beyond that. It was...when she consumed D'bari, it was the equivalent of a human being destroying an ant hill. "We're sorry we have to kill you, ants, but we're hungry, we've got to eat something, we've got to plow this for a freeway." On an evolutionary scale, they were not sentient beings to her. The same goes for the starship. And, again, in her defense, they shot first.

SANDERSON: *Well, by her being on a higher evolutionary plane, mentally, what exactly do you mean by that? Do you mean that she had achieved some higher level of consciousness, or do you mean that rush of power was so overwhelming that these hungers and desires overwhelmed everything else in her psyche?*

CLAREMONT: What I mean is generally at Marvel, evolution is portrayed as the dominance of the mentality over emotion. It's a very Aristotlean classical concept. The High Evolutionary becomes a big-brained, emotionless creature. That thing that Marv [Wolfman] did with John [Byrne] on the *FF* in which Reed's buddy becomes the Futurist, though even he committed some reprehensible acts. It's always been the Marvel tradition that the higher up the ladder you go the more intellect dominates over emotion. Well, what I was saying in this was that Phoenix is the exact opposite: Phoenix is the Life-Bringer, but she is also the Destroyer. Phoenix brings both life and chaos. It is a creature, but a creature fundamentally consecrated to life. To be consecrated to life is to be consecrated to emotion, for better or worse. What Jean was transmuted into as Phoenix was a creature with every emotional sensation, every physical sensation, heightened to an almost infinite degree. And the physical capacity to gratify every emotion

SANDERSON: *Including the sheer lust for power, the enjoyment of power.*

CLAREMONT: Well, it was a sexual thrill It was the ultimate. To use a somewhat gross term, it was the quest for the cosmic orgasm. Her feeding on the planet on the star, was an act of love, of self-love, of masturbation probably. She was on an extreme emotional high, and what happened towards the end—well, what Xavier did was reassert the control of her conscious mind, of her intellectual self over her emotional self

SANDERSON: *In #108 there is an example of Phoenix as the life and love force. When she saves the universe her conscious is completely in control and indeed you have Scott saying that at that time she was the embodiment of love, "You are love."*

CLAREMONT: Scott says it, Storm says it. It's true. The fundamental difference is that had Jean been her nice, normal self and had the Phoenix reasserted herself, it would have been the same sort of thing: the power would have been tempered by Jean's self. But the critical difference was that this transformation came after Mastermind had been playing with her head, had been unlocking all the moral inhibitors within her. So she acted, as Storm said in #135, not out of love, but out of lust. There's a critical difference: the idea that love is the quest for physical sensation tempered by an emotional attachment—by a strong physical-emotional-mental attachment—whereas lust is just scratching an itch. It's a thrill, a physical thrill and nothing else

SANDERSON: *Would you compare Dark Phoenix*

SHE'S GLOWIN'--LIKE A STAR!
SO BRIGHT, IT HURTS. I CAN'T LOOK!
INSIDE MY OWN MIND, THROUGH THE RAPPORT WE SHARE, I CAN FEEL JEAN'S POWER DISSOLVING.
IT'S LIKE WATCHING SOMEONE DIE...
...WHILE, AT THE SAME TIME, DYING YOURSELF...
Oh, JEAN... JEAN!
HE HEARD AN ANIMAL SCREAM LIKE THIS ONCE, WHEN HE WAS VERY YOUNG. IT HAD JUST STEPPED INTO A BEAR TRAP.
THEN, AS NOW, HE REACTED WITHOUT HESITATION, WITHOUT FEAR--

(This and following page) The horror of Jean's psychic lobotomy is movingly depicted through Scott's anguished reactions to it. (From John Byrne's pencils for the original ending of *X-Men* #137)

with Galactus in any way? Galactus is also guided by hunger and always saying he is above good and evil.

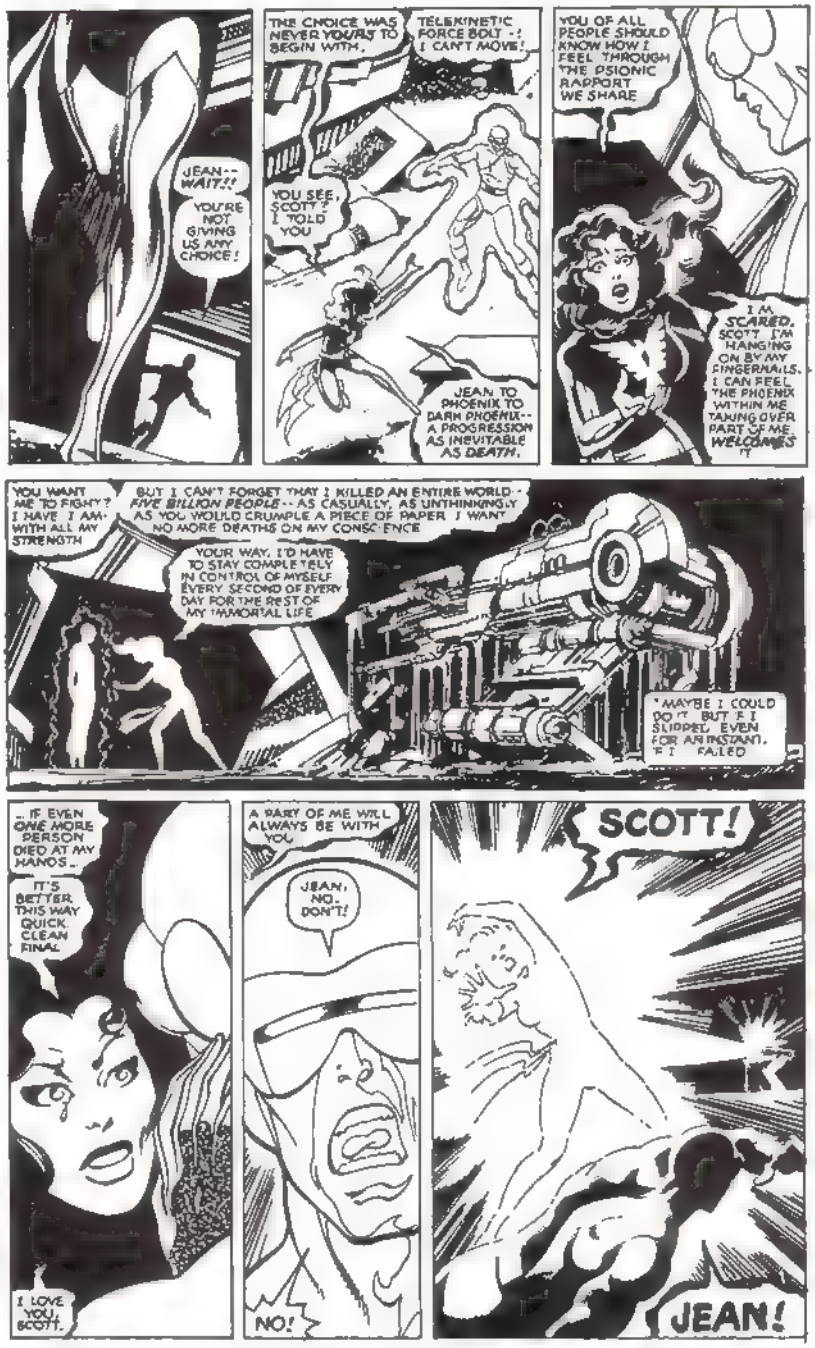
CLAREMONT: I find Phoenix—Jean—a more sympathetic character because she had an awareness after the fact of what she did, and there was the possibility of redemption. Well, in the original conception of the story, there was always the probability of redemption—that's what it was all about. Galactus—

SANDERSON: *—who also began as a human of another planet who was presumably like any other civilized being but, when he gained all this power, went into a complete personality reversal.*

CLAREMONT: I mean, Stan did a story about this vast armada following him around that was made up of survivors of the planets he had destroyed. Yet he's never been punished. The point has never been *raised* that Galactus should be punished. And for example, John's rationale as to why it was all right for him but not for Phoenix is that Galactus says, "I am beyond good and evil." Who says? He says? What gives him the right to say he is beyond good and evil? Is it better to be beyond good and evil and to kill without thought or to be aware that there is a moral choice, and to feel regret, to feel guilt, to feel shame?

Unfortunately, again, you come to a situation where different attitudes and different books reflect the dif ferent moral and philosophical attitudes of the different writers and artists. You have to go back three and a half years to understand that the Phoenix that Dave and I created was not the Phoenix that John and I evolved her into. Doing a "What If?" scenario, if Dave and I had stayed together, the Phoenix story would not have have happened as it did, and I think if Louise [Jones] had been editor from the very beginning, the Phoenix

--REACHING OUT TO THE MAIMED CREATURE, TRYING HIS BEST TO EASE ITS HURT.
I'M HERE, JEAN--
--TAKE MY HAND!
HER GRIP MAKES HIM WINCE WITH PAIN, YET HE ENDURES. SHE'S NEVER NEEDED HIS LOVE, HIS STRENGTH, MORE THAN SHE DOES NOW.
HE WILL NOT FAIL HER.
AND, AS HE HOLDS HER, THE RAPPORT THAT BOUND THEIR MINDS SLOWLY FADES AWAY TO NOTHING. WITHOUT JEAN'S TELEPATHIC POWER TO MAINTAIN IT...
...IT CANNOT EXIST.
UNTIL, FINALLY...
OUR RAPPORT--IT'S GONE!
I FEEL SO EMPTY INSIDE. THERE'S ONLY A HOLLOW ACHE -- AS IF SOMEONE HAD JUST PUNCED A HOLE THROUGH MY HEART.
IF THINGS FEEL THIS AWFUL TO ME, HOW MUCH WORSE ARE THEY FOR JEAN?! SHE JUST COLLAPSED INTO MY ARMS WITHOUT A WORD, A SOUND, A GESTURE!
SHE'S BREATHING--BARELY--BUT THAT'S ABOUT ALL.
SCOTT, IS SHE ALL RIGHT?!
IS THERE ANYTHING WE CAN DO?
HAVEN'T YOU ALREADY DONE ENOUGH?!?!


JEAN--WAIT!!
YOU'RE NOT GIVING US ANY CHOICE!
THE CHOICE WAS NEVER YOURS TO BEGIN WITH.
TELEKINETIC FORCE BOLT -! I CAN'T MOVE!
YOU SEE, SCOTT? I TOLD YOU
JEAN TO PHOENIX TO DARK PHOENIX-- A PROGRESSION AS INEVITABLE AS DEATH.
YOU OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW HOW I FEEL THROUGH THE PSIONIC RAPPORT WE SHARE
I AM SCARED. SCOTT I'M HANGING ON BY MY FINGERNAILS. I CAN FEEL THE PHOENIX WITHIN ME TAKING OVER PART OF ME WELCOMES IT
YOU WANT ME TO FIGHT? I HAVE I AM-WITH ALL MY STRENGTH
BUT I CAN'T FORGET THAT I KILLED AN ENTIRE WORLD-- FIVE BILLION PEOPLE-- AS CASUALLY, AS UNTHINKINGLY AS YOU WOULD CRUMPLE A PIECE OF PAPER. I WANT NO MORE DEATHS ON MY CONSCIENCE
YOUR WAY, I'D HAVE TO STAY COMPLETELY IN CONTROL OF MYSELF EVERY SECOND OF EVERY DAY FOR THE REST OF MY IMMORTAL LIFE
MAYBE I COULD DO IT BUT IF I SLIPPED, EVEN FOR AN INSTANT, IF I FAILED
..IF EVEN ONE MORE PERSON DIED AT MY HANDS..
IT'S BETTER THIS WAY QUICK. CLEAN. FINAL.
I LOVE YOU, SCOTT.
A PART OF ME WILL ALWAYS BE WITH YOU
JEAN, NO. DON'T!
NO!
SCOTT!
JEAN!

The death of Jean Grey, from the final version of *X-Men* #137. [Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

story would not have happened as it did, but what you had was a confluence of people with vastly different attitudes toward the character and toward the storyline; vis-a-vis your article in *Comics Feature* [#4], John and I had diametrically opposed views of what we wanted to do with her, and unfortunately that conflict often resulted in a certain degree of confusion in the plot. For example, to put it on a more mundane level, in the plot I would ask for Nightcrawler to do something, and in the story, John, because of natural antipathy toward Nightcrawler, would downplay it. Which is something one must deal with with every artist. Dave has his favorites. Dave likes Nightcrawler, so Nightcrawler is getting more play. Dave liked Phoenix, because we created her together. John liked Jean, he did not like Phoenix. He would point, for example, to the nine issues that she wasn't in the book—#116-#124—and say, "Look, no one's noticed she's gone!" The irony of that is that sales jumped by about five points every time Phoenix was on the cover. Every time. It's uncanny. From #100 to #101 to #105 to #108—well, #108 is a special case because it was a disaster all the way around—#125 shot through the roof, and you can see it all through the Phoenix story, as the Phoenix appears on the cover the book sells better and better.

SANDERSON: *And of course #137.*

CLAREMONT: As opposed, for example, to the story where Wolverine starred, where sales went down. Number 137's a special case that doesn't really count. It's both a double issue and a landmark—for a seminal issue, anyway.

SANDERSON: *For those readers who don't already know, what exactly did happen with #137 once Shooter saw the scene of destruction of the asparagus people? What was the ending that you and John had planned and what did it turn into?*

CLAREMONT: All right. The ending that John and I had planned for the issue was that on page 28 or 29, we have that pullback from the moon, the *Butch Cassidy* act, and it's obvious that Jean and Scott have been trashed, and then we have a five-page sequence in which Jean essentially has her psionic abilities removed down to a molecular level, the reason being, Lilandra says, that they don't want to destroy Jean, partly because they don't know what relationship she has to the M'Krann crystal. They believe they can safely strip her power; they don't know if they should kill her, so they won't. And she doesn't deserve to be killed. So her power is removed molecule by molecule. The galaxy's greatest telepaths sit there and they

literally take Jean apart molecule by molecule, take out all of the molecules that relate to her psionic ability and put her back together again.

SANDERSON: *Leaving her a normal human*

CLAREMONT: Leaving her a normal human. There things get fuzzy. John wanted to have her essentially lobotomized, reduced to the level of a 12-year-old child, for whom the mere presence of Scott would cause psychic angst and grief, so we'd have your basic impossible love affair. I didn't go for that. I was willing to accept a few issues of her being, essentially, in shock. But what I wanted to do then was spend about the next eight issues or so having Jean come to terms with the fact that she can no longer move things by thought, that she is locked inside of her head for the first time in her adult life.

SANDERSON: *She can no longer sense what people are thinking and feeling. Much less have godlike powers.*

CLAREMONT: Yeah. At the same time she has the memory that she had godlike powers, and more importantly, what she did with them. And then what I wanted to do was build up to #150, where Magneto kidnaps her and offers her the Phoenix. He can restart it all, give it all back, in return for a little, you know, "Smash the little fuckers." So anyway, then we would have the X-Men battling Magneto, and in another room, Jean with the Phoenix there offering itself to her, facing the choice of a lifetime. Does she accept this power that she wants with every fibre of her being, knowing that if she takes it she will probably eventually lose control again, because she's not evolved enough, and go on a rampage and kill and maim and destroy? And she denies it. She says "No! Get thee from me, Phoenix!" And the idea is, it is better to be human than it is to be a wrathful goddess. And then she and Scott marry and they live happily ever after, and then in the 20th anniversary they have a baby.

ALL BEINGS CARRY WITHIN THEM A CAPACITY FOR GOOD AND EVIL. ALL OUR ACTIONS RESULT FROM THE INTERACTION OF THESE TWO FUNDAMENTAL FORCES.
OUR REASON MAKES US AWARE OF THESE FORCES AND LIKEWISE GIVES US THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CHOOSING BETWEEN THEM. REGRETTABLY NOT ALL CHOICES ARE CLEAR CUT, NOR ALL CONFLICTS OBVIOUS
THIS CHILD ACHIEVED A LEVEL OF POWER THAT PLACED HER AS FAR ABOVE HUMANITY -- ON THE EVOLUTIONARY SCALE -- AS THEY ARE ABOVE THE AMOEBA. SHE HAD ONLY TO THINK, AND THAT THOUGHT WOULD BECOME INSTANT REALITY
BUT THE PHOENIX IS ALSO A FORCE OF PRIMAL PASSION, AND HOMO SAPIENS IS STILL AS MUCH A CREATURE OF PASSION AS OF INTELLECT. SUCH PASSION IS BY ITS VERY NATURE SEDUCTIVE AND VIOLENT. JEAN COULD NOT HELP BUT RESPOND TO IT, BE CHANGED BY IT, AND IN TIME, OVERWHELMED.
SO, SHE BRIEFLY BECAME THE DARK SIDE OF PHOENIX: THE BLACK ANGEL, CHAOS-BRINGER. YET, WHEN FACED WITH A CHOICE BETWEEN KEEPING HER GOD-LIKE POWER -KNOWING SHE WOULD THEN WREAK DEATH AND DESTRUCTION ACROSS THE STARS -- AND DYING HERSELF, SHE CHOSE THE LATTER
THAT IS WHAT MAKES HUMANITY VIRTUALLY UNIQUE IN THE COSMOS, MY FRIEND -- THIS EXTRA-ORDINARY CAPACITY FOR SELF-SACRIFICE...
... THIS ABILITY TO TRIUMPH OVER SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLES IF THE CAUSE BE JUST, KNOWING ALL THE WHILE THAT TO DO SO MEANS CERTAIN DEATH
THE X-MEN DO NOT REALIZE IT THEY MAY NEVER REALIZE, OR ACCEPT IT- BUT THIS DAY THEY HAVE WON PERHAPS THE GREATEST VICTORY OF THEIR YOUNG LIVES
JEAN GREY COULD HAVE LIVED TO BECOME A GOD. BUT IT WAS MORE IMPORTANT TO HER THAT SHE DIE... A HUMAN.
The Watcher summarizes and analyzes the Dark Phoenix saga for the benefit of the android Recorder in the final version of *X-Men* #137. [Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

CLAREMONT: Named Rachel. Of course. And then we move on down the line. The idea being that Jean in #137 is the victim. She is not a protagonist; she is acted upon; she does not act in her own behalf. In #150, she is the hero. She singlehandedly all by herself, and no one knows it, saves the universe again. It's the greatest sacrifice that has ever been made. It would be like Lucifer deciding not to rebel against God. It is that seminal an event. And with that act, she thereby proves humanity's essential worth as a creature in the cosmos, not that they have this capacity, but that they have the capacity to deny it, to deny ultimate power for the benefit of all. Essentially all the stuff the Watcher said at the end of #137 would have been said at the end of #150 but not because she killed herself, but because she denied this infinite power.

SANDERSON: *It's Faust making the right decision.*

CLAREMONT: Right. It's Faust saying, "No-o-o-o-o-o...I don't know. I don't think so." And thereby it relates to the theoretically infinite human capacity for good.

SANDERSON: *So this is how #137 originally ended.*

CLAREMONT: Essentially, what happened was in March I think, when we were putting this together, I was due into the office to talk to Jim [Shooter] about the *X-Men* fan book, so I walked into the office expecting to talk about the fan book. I'm called into his office. He's got the make-ready for #135, the boards for #136, and the art Xeroxes for #137 on his desk, and he tells me flat-out that #137's been rejected. Number 137

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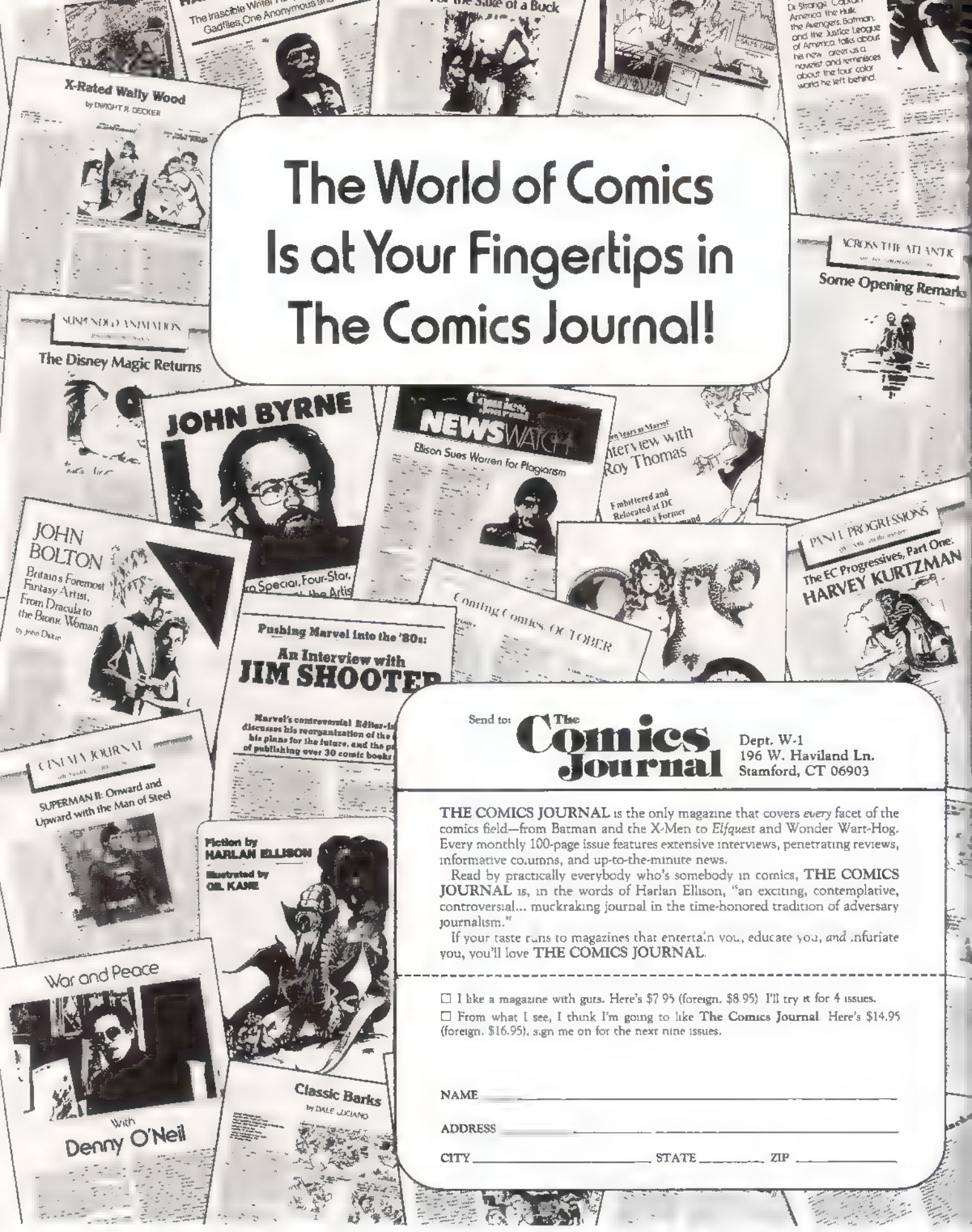

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SENATOR IN ALL HONESTY, I FAIL TO SEE THE NEED FOR THIS HEARING, OR YOUR CONCERN
THE NEED IS SIMPLE Dr MacTAGGERT I MERELY WONDER IF-- IN A WORLD OF BEINGS LIKE Dr DOOM, MAGNETO, THE FANTASTIC FOUR, THE AVENGERS, AND LORD KNOWS HOW MANY OTHERS--
--THERE'S ANY PLACE FOR ORDINARY MEN AND WOMEN
I WONDER, AS WELL, DOCTOR, IF THIS SAME QUESTION WASN'T ASKED BY THE LAST NEANDERTHAL ABOUT THE FIRST CRO-MAGNON?
?!?!?

Senator Edward Kelly voices humanity's fears about the growing number of mutants and other super-powered beings on Marvel-Earth. [*X-Men* #141: Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

has been by this time pencilled, scripted, all but the last page lettered, and the first five pages have been inked. It is essentially three weeks away from completion. Number 136 should have gone to the printer that Friday; this is a Thursday. Jim [Shooter] says the book is rejected, and then he explains why. By this time Louise has already been appointed editor of the book, effective with #138. Louise and I then sat down and we started putting together #137, because Salicrup didn't want any part of it, and I was real pissed off at this point and I didn't want to work with him on it anyway. Shooter's original idea was to take #137, break it in half, and do two regular issues, #137 and #138. He wanted the book completely repencilled, started from scratch. He did not want Jean getting away scot free, he did not want this, he did not want that. The essential given was that he thought Jean had committed four billion four hundred and thirty acts of homicide, first degree murder, and she was getting away for it with a slap on the wrist. He would not be dissuaded from this view So I go into Louise's ofice, I'm sitting here in shock, we try to come up with a solution, and my mind is in a fog. John and I had discussed this on the phone. Shooter wanted Jean punished. He wanted her to suffer. His idea was she go to prison, that she be tortured horribly, that she be drawn and quartered, whipped, chained...

SANDERSON: *Well, not that.*

CLAREMONT: Yes! Tortured horribly. I mean, drawn and quartered at morning and put back together at night. He wanted the tortures of Prometheus Chained to a rock with the eagles ripping her guts out every day, or a reasonable facsimile thereof. I'm sitting in Louise's office trying to put this together. John and I both decide that at that point we're both thinking in terms of going to Jim's [Shooter] office and saying, "Listen, you have someone write #137 and #138, we'll abide by whatever you do, we wash our hands of it." Because at this point we were not at fault. I had cleared every plot. Every plot had been cleared by Salicrup. Every script had been cleared by Salicrup, and I assumed by Shooter. I was sitting in Shooter's office saying, "I *told* you this!" But he didn't remember. "Didn't Jim [Salicrup] show you the plots?" No. "Didn't Jim show you the scripts?" No. And Jim [Shooter]'s saying, well, he understands that it's not our fault, that we did everything that we were supposed to do, but he feels that it is his responsibility as Editor-in-Chief of Marvel Comics to see that nothing goes out of the office that reflects a moral position that he does not think Marvel should take, and he felt that this story made a moral statement, that Marvel should not stand behind. And he did not feel that we had laid sufficient foundation for the forgiveness aspect that I was talking about

So then Mike Friedrich comes in—bless his heart! and said there is no way in God's green Earth that we can split up the book. We have commitments from retailers for over 100,000 copies, direct sales. They'll just slit our throats. It will destroy Marvel's credibility So we're stuck with the big issue. Well, there's a limit to how much John can do in terms of repencilling, because he's got *Cap* [*Captain America*] on his desk, he's got the next *X-Men* on his desk, we're both pissed, so it eventually comes down to the fact that if anything's going to happen, it's going to happen in the last five pages, period. So I'm tossing a number of ideas around in my head. It's still Thursday afternoon. I try a couple out on Louise. She says they sound fine. I go to Jim [Shooter], I try them on him. He says "Sounds good to me," but evidently the only one he heard, or the only one that stayed in his mind, is that Jean dies So I told Louise I was going home, went home, watched *Buck Rogers*, I slid back some bourbon, and then Friday I came in. Again, bear in mind that we needed something that had to be pencilled and written and lettered by the time Terry [Austin] finished inking the first 30 pages. The book had to go to press; it was due on the stands in five weeks. It was real late. So that meant that at the absolute latest we had to have something we could get to John by the weekend, which meant it had to be something I could call him about. We were going to give it to Shooter and Shooter would give it to John because they were both meeting at a convention in Miami. So what happened was, I wrote a plot which was essentially this. We end the last shot in page 28 or 29 with people on the ship going, "Majestrix, something's happening on the planet." Number 29 was supposed to be: Shot of the moon, ship in the

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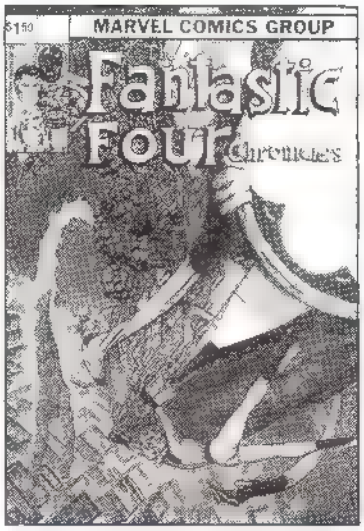

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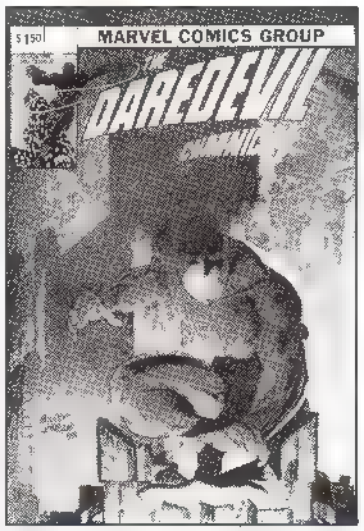

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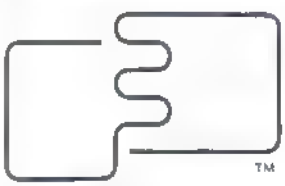

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foreground, Phoenix effect around the moon, the bird, claws out, wings extended, bolt of energy just plowing up from the moon through the ship—boom!—panic on the ship, Xavier going, "Oh God, wake up, my X-Men," X-Men responding, attacking Jean, she and Scott end up getting knocked into the Watcher's house, which we've previously established as having weaponry and devices that are beyond the ken of mortal men. Jean and Scott have their scene, the Watcher is standing there in the background somewhere observing. Jean picks his brains unbeknownst to him, finds the right weapon, uses it to destroy herself, or to manifest herself on some other plane of existence, or transport herself to some other plane of existence, Scott is upset, Watcher has a big moment, story ends...

SANDERSON: *Ah! So it would have been unclear exactly what happens to Jean?*

CLAREMONT: Her corporeal form would have faded away, but it would have been some esoteric device of the Watcher's that would have done the trick.

SANDERSON: *It wouldn't have been labelled "a death"; we just wouldn't know what had happened.*

CLAREMONT: Yeah. Well, as far as Scott's concerned, it would have been a death. Now, John evidently went down to Miami with Jim [Shooter] and gave him a somewhat different breakdown of the last six pages, the critical fact being that John felt the Watcher should not be involved, the Watcher's house should not be involved. Louise and I weren't told of this until we got the pencils. Fait accompli. There was nothing we could do about it. It was too late to get them repencilled. Louise was upset that he had approved a plot change without telling her. Jim was very apologetic; he thought John had discussed it with her, John thought Jim had I was wondering what the fuck was going on. And again, the splash page, that shot of the ship being blown away, is not what I'd plotted, and more fundamentally, by replacing the Watcher's house with a Kree blaster, then you have to accept, given the history of the Blue Area of the Moon as outlined by [Steve] Englehart, that a device constructed by the Kree at the very beginnings of their mechanistic civilizations, when they were essentially being given everything by the Skrulls, is capable of destroying Dark Phoenix. To me, anyway, that stretched the bonds of credibility.

SANDERSON: *Then the building at the end of #137 was supposed to be a Kree house, not the Watcher's?*

CLAREMONT: Oh, that's the catacombs. That's part of the blue area, something built by the Kree thousands of years ago. It's not the Watcher's house. The Watcher's house is that crystalline dome hemisphere that Wolverine falls through, and again, the structure of the story as pencilled was such that there was no

I'M ACTUALLY...ENJOYING THIS--AND REGRETTING THAT MY SOLE PURPOSE HERE IS TO KEEP DOOM OCCUPIED WHILE MY FELLOW X-MEN FIND AND FREE ARCADE THEY SHOULD HAVE REACHED HIS CELL BY NOW.
DOOM IS A-- FASCINATING MAN.
EXTRAORDINARY. STORM SEEMS DRAWN TO ME, AS I AM TO HER. LIONESS TO LION. QUEEN TO KING
SHE DOES NOT FEAR ME
SHE SHOULD SHE WILL

Some Enchanted Evening: a quiet dinner between Storm and Dr. Doom. [*X-Men* #145: Claremont-Cockrum-Rubinstein]

opportunity prior to Jean's death to explain the logic behind it, which is why you've got Scott going "Oh, weep, weep, weep," and then you've got those five balloons sitting on his head explaining why Jean did what she did.

SANDERSON: *Did you feel that you could still indicate in the story that, "Well, maybe she didn't die, she just went to the Phantom Zone," or something?*

CLAREMONT: [*Pause*]. No.

SANDERSON: *That when the bolt hit her, the only possible explanation was that she was dead*

CLAREMONT: At that point I was—someone once described it as "a fit of pique"—"How dare I destroy such a character in a fit of pique?"—and yet that entered into it. If we'd had two weeks, if Jim had said, "Well, restructure it in this and that way," we could have sat back and done things properly. See, the problem was that the following issue had already been drawn, the flashback. There was no opportunity to take a step backward and say, "Well, let's do this, this, and this." Also my thought processes at the time were that I would not have Jean taken to prison, because I could not then viably see any way that the X-Men would leave her there. So that meant that we'd have a situation where...the X-Men are continually trying to rescue her, and back and forth and back and forth and back and forth. It made no sense.

SANDERSON: *And I take it you weren't particularly agreeable to the idea of torture either?*

CLAREMONT: No. Because I didn't think she'd done anything wrong. It's very funny. I was talking to this federal prosecutor up in Boston last fall, who's an

X-Men fan, and we were talking about #137, and I pointed out Jim's position and she was stunned, because she could have gotten her off like that! Easily. It would have taken only the most minimal psychiatric examination. In a sense, horrible as it sounds—considering the consequences as horrible—as far as I was concerned what happened to Jean in #135 and #136, bearing in mind that the sequence from that moment she turns into Dark Phoenix to the moment she is stopped by Xavier takes place in about two hours real time, is the functional equivalent of someone being woken out of a sound sleep. Now, in law, if you are woken out of a sound sleep and kill the person who is waking you up, you cannot be held liable for murder, because you are not in conscious control of your actions. You are still in dreamland. Jean was in the same situation. For those two hours she was not in conscious control of her actions She was just overwhelmed. She was reacting, not acting—reacting to things within her. And so while she was rational, she was not sane, if you follow that. In English law, the concept is referred to as "diminished capacity." And at the end of it, there simply wasn't time, given the fact that we only had six pages, given the fact that the next issue was pencilled and we couldn't bump it, given the fact that the story had to come to an end, given the fact that we were all furious and all hurt...

SANDERSON: *So you couldn't come up with anything about her possible survival.*

CLAREMONT: Well, it was awkward because as soon as Jim [Shooter] heard "Oh, she's going to die," Jim spoke to John, John liked it, John thought that was fine, so I was really kind of left out on the edge of the limb. I could quit. The only option I had was not to finish the story and quit, and I wasn't willing to do that. So we made the best of it. And if there is a lesson to be learned, it is that all facets of comic books are mutable. Something that I had been building up to for the better part of a year was totally reversed at the last moment. And it can happen again, it can happen to anyone. It happened to David Michelinie with *Avengers* #200, not to say that David's original plot for *Avengers* #200 would have been that much of an improvement over what was shown, but at least it would have been his, it would have been an outgrowth of elements of the Marvel Universe as opposed to what finally came out, which was a very strange and not totally pleasant mishmosh

SANDERSON: *Now, as for #138, that had already been drawn, as you say It was mostly flashbacks about the X-Men's past, but it had a framing device with Scott and Jean roaming through the woods outside the mansion, and the framing device was changed to the funeral. Now it seems to me that much of the controversy over Dark Phoenix has been over the idea that a character who had always been portrayed as virtuous, heroic, and idealistic, like Jean, could have had anywhere in her being the urge to kill. For example in the Legion of Super-Heroes story in which Brainiac 5 is found not guilty of murder, one of the themes seems to be that "A Legionnaire would never kill, even if he's insane." That's said directly You apparently seem to feel differently, that there is the potential for evil lying in every human soul.*

CLAREMONT: Of course There has to be. Otherwise there's no potential for good. To reflect back to something I said in *Team-Up*—the Man-Thing story. Dakimh says, "They've beaten D'Spayre," and Spidey says, "Oboy! We've killed him!" and Dakimh replies, "No, he cannot die. So long as a living being exists anywhere in the universe, so long as there is hope, it must be balanced by despair." The yin and yang. I mean, for example, Winston Churchill was a virtuous man, and yet he approved the bombing of Dresden, which was a totally worthless act; it had no strategic bearing on the war; the Allies just bombed Dresden; they expunged it. It could be argued that there was no military need to drop the bomb on Nagasaki; the Japanese had gotten the message. But it was dropped. You could say the military decision to use flamethrowers and napalm in the Pacific—or to use napalm in the Pacific and not in Europe...

SANDERSON: *You could point to literary precedents too - whether it's "Heart of Darkness" or* Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde *or the Hulk and Eclipso.*

CLAREMONT: Yeah How is it that Richard Nixon who was a Quaker could orchestrate the most vicious six-week cycle of bombing in the history of modern warfare in 1972 against the North Vietnamese?nMacbeth, for Chrissake! Or Hamlet. Or Othello even, who was a kind and virtuous and decent man. If the potential does not exist within us, then where is the inherent characterizational and dramatic conflict? In a sense all my writings reflect or tend to reflect the ambiguity, that nothing is or should be as it seems. The whole point of being a hero is not just to surmount external adversity, but internal adversity too. It is to be aware that there is in us that which is nasty and vicious and evil

SANDERSON: *Wolverine is a good example.*

CLAREMONT: Well, that story that Richard Matheson did for *Star Trek* in which Kirk is split into his good side and his evil side. Like it or not, the evil side, the emotional, brutish, neanderthalic lustful animal, is what gives him the strength of command, the ruthlessness that is necessary to command a starship. Yet the gentle loving decent half of him is what tempers that, what gives him the sensitivity that makes him the

THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE EASY. HEAT IS PUSHING AGAINST ME. I HAVE TO TACK...
...AND THAT USES UP TIME, TAKES US DEEPER INTO THE SHAFT-- NO! I MUSTN'T THINK ABOUT THAT.
ALMOST THERE-- HEAT, FUMES, GETTING HARD TO BREATHE.
REACH, MAN-- REACH!!
A LIFE IS IN PERIL. AND THAT'S WHAT'S IMPORTANT.
IMAGES COLLIDE IN HER MIND, GAROKK'S EYES MIRRORING THE ANCIENT TERROR WITHIN HER. WITHOUT MEANING TO, SHE HESITATES...
AARRGH!
...AND IS LOST.
IN THAT INSTANT, STORM IS NO MORE. THERE'S ONLY ORORO, A CHILD...
...WHOSE PRIVATE HELL IS THE FEAR OF DYING ALONE, BURIED, IN THE DARK.

Vertigo: Storm plunges down a bottomless p t after the falling Garokk. [*X-Men* #116 Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

MAYBE I'M JUST MAKING EXCUSES FOR MYSELF... BUT, I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT MY DEADLY EYES SET ME APART-- IN A WORLD OF MY OWN!
SINCE I FEEL I'M A POTENTIAL THREAT TO ANYONE I MEET... ANYONE I KNOW... I'VE ALWAYS TRIED TO KEEP EVERYBODY AT ARM'S LENGTH!
I SUPPOSE ...I'VE ALWAYS SUSPECTED AS MUCH!
STILL, YOU MUSTN'T FEEL YOU'RE SO TOTALLY ALONE! THERE ARE OTHER PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, SCOTT... AND, SOME OF THEM DO CARE!
THANKS, JEAN! I JUST HAD TO GET IT OFF MY CHEST--TO TRY TO FIND SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTANDS!
I DO UNDERSTAND, SCOTT... BELIEVE ME!
AND NOW THAT I DO, MR. SUMMERS, I'LL NEVER REST TILL I BREAK THRU THE REST OF THAT SHELL OF YOURS... AND FIND OUT IF IT'S JEAN GREY YOU WANT, OR ONLY PITY!
WELL, WE'D BETTER GO!
SHE DOES LOVE ME--I KNOW SHE DOES! AND, I MUST TELL HER HOW I FEEL... SOON!
12

Scott first begins to open up to Jean on a walk after Bobby's birthday party. [*X-Men* #32: Thomas-Roth-Tartaglione]

unique individual that he is. And as Kirk says in the story, he's seen a part of himself that no human being should ever have to see. But the point of being human is being aware that we have that capacity within us all The men and women, for the most part, who worked at Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen and Dachau were not monsters. They were *people*. What has to be remembered is that they were people, they were ordinary men and woman. And doing the most horrible of crimes to survive. And—the thing is that to be an archetypical hero, you have to be aware that the capacity for evil exists within us, and surmount it. That's what Frank Miller's trying to emphasize in *Daredevil*—the aspect of the devil in him. Matt Murdock is the rational man in him. I think he said in a recent letter column that Daredevil and Elektra are two sides of the same coin, both created by the same set of incidents: The violent murder of their own only parent. Daredevil opted for the rational, became a lawyer, became Daredevil. Elektra opted for the irrational, she became a mercenary. But there is a strong sense on both parts that "There but for the grace of God go I." And I think we must have that conflict in every character, to a greater or lesser extent. If all we have is a character who's just sweetness and light, or unremitting evil, what's the point? What made the character of Doctor Doom memorable for me when I was a kid was that scene in the *Prisoner* issue of the *FF* where the FF are penetrating Doom's castle and they're in his portrait gallery and Hauptman the flunky comes in with a flamethrower, he's going to burn them all out, and Doom just sonically turns the guy to mush. His rationale: "Flunkies I can get a dime-a-dozen, and the FF I will fight again another day, but the paintings are immortal and irreplaceable and they must be preserved."

SANDERSON: *Or even perhaps more interestingly, at one point he's going to blow up the FF in that story and he realizes at the last moment that if he does that he's going to destroy a village of his subjects, and he seems to be in panic, he can't do that*

CLAREMONT: He does it anyway.

SANDERSON: *Well, it's too late to stop it, apparently.*

CLAREMONT: Yeah. The idea that one can be a villain and hateful and yet have totally justifiable motives is something a lot of letter-writers have picked up on in the Future History stories [#141-2]. Senator Kelly, what he is doing and why he is doing it are quite rational. He is scared. He is frightened by what is understandably a real threat. Anyway, the idea for me is that one should never create a character who is wholly good or wholly evil. Or if the character is wholly evil, for example, he should have panache I mean, Doom is unremittingly, wholly evil, but he's got style In terms of this X-Men story, the things he does to Storm, the things he does to the X-Men are really swinish, but he's got such style. "Doom does not engage in fisticuffs, youth." ZAP! Or when he thinks of Storm, "She's attracted to me, as I to her, lioness to lion, queen to king. She does not fear me She should. She will." Of course, then, two issues later, Storm says the same thing to him. But the idea is that she *is* attracted to him; he is a very magnetic—if you'll pardon the pun—person, and so is she. Yet for all that attraction, he still turns her into a statue. The idea of, "Will

IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL EVENING, PERFECT FOR A LOVERS' STROLL THROUGH CENTRAL PARK. WE MUST HAVE WALKED AND TALKED FOR HOURS.
I DON'T REMEMBER MUCH OF MY CHILDHOOD, EXCEPT IN... NIGHTMARES I USED TO HAVE A LOT OF THEM. I'D BE FALLING THROUGH FLAMES; I'D SEE FACES -- A MAN, A WOMAN, MY FOLKS I GUESS. I'LL NEVER KNOW FOR SURE.
I WAS IN THE HOSPITAL FOR OVER A YEAR, AFTER I WAS FOUND. THE DOCTORS SAID I SUFFERED SOME BRAIN DAMAGE THAT ACCOUNTS FOR MY AMNESIA. AND, THE PROFESSOR THINKS, FOR WHY I CAN'T CONTROL MY OPTIC BLASTS.
I WAS NEVER ADOPTED. THE ORPHANAGE WAS THE ONLY HOME I KNEW. UNTIL I RAN AWAY. SAYING ALL THIS ISN'T EASY, JEAN I..
I... LOVE YOU. I'VE LOVED YOU FROM THE MOMENT I SET EYES ON YOU.
AND I, YOU, SCOTT, WITH ALL MY HEART!

Later during that same walk, a scene occurs that we wait until *X-Men* #138 to see [. Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

you join me for dinner? My chef sets a superb table. He dares not to do otherwise."

SANDERSON: *Well, you are also saying that anybody under the right circumstances could get back to the evil side. I was very struck in #99 when Scott gets into a veritable berserker rage, pounding Lang because Jean's in danger.*

CLAREMONT: All you have to do is pick up the paper. David Chapman. A nice, quiet, reserved little nebbish Yet he allegedly blows away John Lennon

SANDERSON: *And those political examples you were giving me before, of people who do horrible things in the name of good reasons.*

CLAREMONT: Exactly. Charles Whitman. Again, a nice, normal, well-thought-out conservative man, climbs up to the top of the University Bell Tower in Austin, Texas and blows away 35 people But in a sense it relates to the concept of the banality of evil. We all have within us, I think, the capacity for good or evil. There are circumstances under which I can envision myself taking life. They are extreme and just because I imagine them does not mean I could go through with them, if push came to shove. But again, it makes no sense to me for a character to say "I will not kill" unless she knows within herself is the capacity to do it.

SANDERSON: *She's said that, at least at one point.*

CLAREMONT: Yes. Of course

SANDERSON: *In the circus story [#111], she said she was tempted to kill. During the Magneto story [#112] she wondered whether she ought to kill him. But she held back.*

CLAREMONT: Somebody pointed out in a letter, what would happen if Storm were faced with a choice of killing one person, because either she kills person A, or 4,000 people will die? Could she do it? I don't think so. I don't know. Or if she did it, it would destroy her. As a matter of fact, this conundrum is one of the key elements in *X-Men* #150.

SANDERSON: *But she nevertheless might find herself doing it.*

CLAREMONT: She might, as leader of the X-Men.

SANDERSON: *Just as Colossus finds himself destroying Proteus and feeling horribly guilty afterwards but knowing he had to do it.*

CLAREMONT: Mm-hm. But the thing I find extremely amusing about that issue is that everybody relates to Wolverine's killing the guard, but no one has ever written in about the fact that ten pages later, Colossus, who has been chained to a stake and is white hot, is picking these guys up and slapping them and punching them and tossing them. His skin temperature is probably 500 degrees centigrade and he is *hitting* people. The contact third degree burns alone are awesome. No one has ever mentioned that. And if he didn't kill them, it probably would have been more of a mercy to do it. But the point is that the reason he's doing it is that they are to him as the Nazis were to his parents. Butchers, not deserving mercy. He lost control.

SANDERSON: *Well, he didn't really react to what he'd done in that case as he did with Proteus.*

CLAREMONT: No, he didn't. Again, those are scenes we'd like to see. Storm reacting to being unable to save Garokk She was ashamed, she should have saved him, but she was scared. She thought she would be buried alive, trapped in the darkness, as she was as a child.

SANDERSON: *You often do stories in which heroes have to overcome an emotion, whether it's rage or fear, whether it's Storm's claustrophobia or Sprite facing that monster, the demon..*

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CLAREMONT: Spider-Man facing D'Spayre.

SANDERSON: *Well, Cyclops facing D'Spayre [#144]. You seem very interested in what you expressly called the "rites of passage" stories. Numbers 143 and 144 are both that kind of story. So is #137 in its final form*

CLAREMONT: We're dealing with archetypes, again. An archetype must have an archetypal conflict to surmount.

SANDERSON: *Heroic courage triumphing over the emotions.*

CLAREMONT: Right. To me, there is a certain technical fascination in the hero escaping from a death trap, in the surmounting of a technical problem That's why the Murderworld stories are fun to think up and lousy to write, because thinking them up is a technical exercise: "What new death trap can I throw at them?" But when I actually sit down and write the story, it's nothing but a collage of events, it's a fast-paced TV show. It's a lot of surface stuff, whereas for me I would rather get deep down inside and dissect the guts. Successfully or unsuccessfully, as the case may be Again, this relates back to another major fan criticism, the idea of Scott's denial of Jean in #113. Some thought that was cruel and callous and out of character

ALL HIS LIFE, SCOTT'S WONDERED ABOUT THE GRAY NOTHINGNESS THAT WAS HIS CHILDHOOD. NOW, SUDDENLY, THE ANSWERS ARE WITHIN HIS GRASP...
SCOTT?
NO!! THE MEMORIES--THEY'RE GONE.
AM I DISTURBING YOU?
NOT...REALLY, ORORO. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
I WAS CONCERNED. AND A LITTLE LONELY. IN MY OWN WAY, I CARED FOR JEAN AS MUCH AS YOU DID. I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE SOMEONE WITH WHOM TO SHARE YOUR GRIEF.
I WISH I HAD SOME GRIEF TO SHARE.
I DO NOT UNDERSTAND.
I DON'T, EITHER. I MOURNED FOR HANK, BUT-- FOR JEAN THERE'S NOTHING THERE.
AFTER THE SHUTTLE FLIGHT, NOTHING HAD CHANGED BETWEEN US, YET EVERYTHING HAD. SHE WASN'T THE GIRL I'D LOVED ANYMORE.
PERHAPS IT WAS SIMPLY THAT SHE WAS NO LONGER A GIRL. AS YOU ARE NO LONGER A BOY.
WE HAVE ALL CHANGED, SCOTT. HOPEFULLY, WE HAVE ALL GROWN AS WELL.
IF YOU WANTED ONLY TO PRESERVE THE JEAN-THAT-WAS, LIKE A FLY IN AMBER, PERHAPS WHAT YOU FELT FOR HER WASN'T LOVE AT ALL.
X-MEN #XX--PG6
Ororo and Scott clash over his seeming insensitivity to Jean's apparent demise n Antarctica [*X-Men* #114. Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

SANDERSON: *They said he was a cad.*

CLAREMONT: Right. I felt it very strongly with Scott, because I saw in him a number of parallels to Star-Lord, whom I was writing at the same time. Just stepping sideways for a moment: Doug Moench in the *Super Special* has Star-Lord meeting this alien and making love with "her" and it's all very nice and beautiful and happy...

SANDERSON: *And smoky.*

CLAREMONT: Yes. Smoke gets in your eyes But to me characterizationally that scene is totally wrong. Here we have a person whose father died at childbirth, whose mother was killed before his eyes at age eight; he grew up in a state orphanage, he was a loner. The only friendly contact we see him have is with an owl, and Steve Englehart makes the point quite specifically in the first story that while Peter Quill is a hunk, while everyone admires his ability, they think he's a shit. He has no human friends. As far as I was concerned, he was a virgin—emotionally and physically. And if I had stayed on the series, what I would have done is build up to a story where he very specifically meets someone—"Ship" or someone else—falls in love, or at least falls in like enough to make love to her, and does it, and that would have been a—pardon the pun—seminal event in his life. Scott I saw in the same way All we know of him is that at about age 18 he was contacted by Professor Xavier. All his previous life had been spent at the state orphanage in the Midwest somewhere. Now think about it. .here's a young man, 18 years old, white handsome, in possession of all his faculties, and he wasn't adopted? Granted, these are after-the-fact rationalizations, but take that element: he was never adopted. Well, an orphanage is a transient community: people are being adopted all the time. This means he probably had no set circle of friends. He wasn't even sent to a foster home. And Scott had to have been prime adoptable material, out in the Midwest

SANDERSON: *He was probably so depressed about something that happened to him that...*

CLAREMONT: Oh no. The rationale I developed goes back to when he and Alex went out the airplane and the parachute burned, Scott landed on his head, so to speak, and was in a coma for a year. That's what caused the brain damage that screwed up his eyes. Bear in mind that he was nine years old, which is old to be adopted, but then every time potential parents

HI, YOURSELF, COLLEEN
WHAT HAPPENED IN THERE? I FELT THE WHOLE BUILDING SHAKE.
NOT MUCH. JUST THE USUAL FUN-AND-GAMES, X-MEN STYLE

Colleen Wing [*X-Men* #122: Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

would come by, they'd be told, "Oh yes, but he is B-R-A-I-N D-A-M-A-G-E-D." "Oh, we don't want him." That's why Alex was adopted and Scott wasn't. Okay, so here we have this loner, his key characterizational element is that he is a loner He is so alone that it took him 30 issues of the book just to admit to Jean that he cared for her.

SANDERSON: *She didn't admit it for a long time either.*

CLAREMONT: True. Now, bearing in mind again that Scott and Jean have known each other for almost four years, that they have declared their love for each other for at most two years, bearing in mind that she has transmuted into a demi-goddess form, and at the time I had just lost a very close friend—she died very suddenly—I was examining how people relate to death, and especially to the death of someone you love. And it is not straightforward. You feel blindsided There are a lot of elements involved, and unfortunately, probably more things than can be conveyed in a comic book. See, when John breaks down stories he draws them as if he were the writer, and his classic defense if I argue about his structure of a scene is that he could write it, why couldn't I? Basically, because we're two different people, and I like different things than he does. So we had that scene which I felt was too short, where Scott's by the pool [#114]. Storm touches on something with Jean. She's asking Scott to deal with something that as far as I was concerned, he was functionally, constitutionally not able to deal with. The death of someone who's as close and as important to him as anyone in his life He was essentially being faced with the prospect of being alone again, and I couldn't see anywhere that that could have come from. There was to me no characterizational justification either in the first 65 issues of the book, or in my issues for that matter, showing that his emotional growth was such that it could support that kind of response.

I again was identifying very strongly with Scott because we have a lot of things in common. I probably said in some interview that I found Scott boring; what I meant was that I found Scott boring when I got him, and when I looked at him more closely, I discovered we had a lot of elements in common. He's probably the closest to me of anybody in the book

Someone like Scott would internalize the grief, would shut it away, would ignore it, and by ignoring it would ignore his own feelings toward Jean. What I wanted to do with the Colleen Wing relationship was to show him growing up, show him getting in touch with his emotions, his feelings, his needs, his fears, his loves, his hates, his griefs, his joys, so that when he finally found Jean again they could experience their love in the fullest measure. So that when she died the second time, though the grief was almost more than he could bear, he was able to pick himself up and go off

SANDERSON: *And not only that, but he recognized the grief. He wasn't in shock.*

CLAREMONT: The difference between Scott in #114 and Scott in #138 was the difference between a boy and a man.

SANDERSON: *With regard to that, I'll just quote to you what Scott said in #114: "I mourn for Hank, but for Jean, there's nothing there. After the shuttle flight, nothing had changed between us yet everything had She was no longer the girl I'd loved." Storm said, "Perhaps it was simply that she was no longer a girl and you were no longer a boy We have all changed, Scott, hopefully we have grown as well. If you wanted only to preserve the being there was, like a fly in amber, perhaps what you felt for her wasn't love at all."*

CLAREMONT: Now this relates tangentially to a problem I have as a writer, which is that the dialogue... [*borrows Sanderson's notes, reads the quotation with inflections*]. See, when I write dialogue in my head, I hear it. .

SANDERSON: *I wasn't trying to act it out...*

CLAREMONT: No, no, no, I'm not saying you were, but what I am saying, and this relates to the response to Storm as a hypocritical prig and Scott as a cad, is that this scene works if it's *acted* because you have nuances in the speaking of the lines that might not be seen when those lines are just read on paper, especially considering Storm's action in the scene: she's walking away as she's saying them.

SANDERSON: *I think John make it look too confrontational.*

CLAREMONT: Again, we were working at cross-purposes. And also, sometimes what will happen is that the intent changes. I'll intend one thing in the plot

I WISH YOU'D STAY.
I'VE GOT TO WORK.
BUT HERE'S SOMETHING TO REMEMBER ME BY. OPEN IT AFTER THE TRAIN'S PULLED OUT. 'BYE.
OH, COLLEEN, WHAT ARE YOU GETTING YOURSELF INTO?
HEAD SAYS KEEP THINGS CASUAL. HEART SAYS GO FOR BROKE. LOT OF RISK THAT WAY.
SALEM CENT
WE COULD BOTH BE TERRIBLY HURT.
"BUT WE COULD ALSO BE VERY, VERY HAPPY.
"AND THAT PRIZE IS WORTH ANY RISK."

A near miss the growing closeness between Colleen Wing and Scott Summers when he mistakenly believes Jean Grey to be dead. [*X-Men* #122: Claremont-Byrne-Austin]

and for better or worse when I get the art and I'm actually writing it, the story takes on its own dynamic and a better idea may come to me, or a different idea, and I'll go with it, and sometimes that's at variance with what the artist has given me. John's complained about that a number of times in interviews, that the words I write often will not be confluent with the art. I am by my ethic pretty much stuck with the art that I get, but by the same token I do not consider myself wholly bound by it. I write what I feel when I write it, as John draws, or Dave draws, what they feel when the draw it, and nothing is ever 100% or even 50% sometimes of what you want it to be. Because you're involved in a continuing, ongoing compromise. I've said this many times before: my idea is interpreted by an editor, it is then sent to John who interprets it visually, it is then sent to me, who reinterprets it on script, it is then sent back to the editor who evaluates it, so we've got literally four different levels of interpretation, so that the finished product might be marginally or considerably removed from the original conception. And, except in the case of someone like Frank Miller on *Daredevil* or John on the *FF*, where the artist and the writer are the same human being, you're always going to have that problem, because you're dealing with two different creative people, the writer and the artist.

SANDERSON: *Possibly, Storm's last line here, "perhaps what you felt wasn't love at all," many people interpret the speech differently. Maybe they felt you were trying to say it wasn't.*

CLAREMONT: What I was trying to say was that he didn't know what it was. It's the question I always used to ask my dad as a kid. "How do you know when you're in love?" "You'll know." "But *how* will I know?!" "You'll *know*." "Great." Well, I didn't know. I learned about infatuation, I learned about lust, I learned about like, and *then* I learned about love. It's a growth process. The point I was trying to make was that Scott had no way of knowing whether or not he was in love with Jean because he had nothing to base it on. He had nothing to compare it with It just existed on its own in an emotional vacuum. And because I felt that he did not know what love was—and this is an arbitrary creative decision on my part, I could have been wrong—he could not have known what grief was. Any grief he felt would have been surface, would have been a sham.

SANDERSON: *So he felt an empty shock at this time and didn't realize it was the grief?*

CLAREMONT: A numbness. He felt nothing. Hank was a friend. Scott knows friendship. He knows comradeship, companionship. He felt for Hank, but not for Jean because his emotions for Jean were so deep and so strong and so basic that he could not cope with them and rather than cope with them he denied them, whereas—and that's where the scene from #129 comes in (four issues too late; again that scene should have been in #126, but John felt there wasn't any room). The idea was that what Scott felt for Jean was love but he didn't know it, because he didn't know what love was, really. He knew what it was supposed to be, what it was in books, but the only way you can learn about love, or any deep, primal emotion—grief, hate, fear, courage—is experience. You have to have been there. And what I was doing was putting Scott there.

SANDERSON: *Scott's speech that I quoted also seems to indicate that part of the shock and numbness is related to something he expresses in #109, briefly, which is his confusion about Jean's change in person-*

ality since she became Phoenix, this new exuberance in her use of her power. So he says here that he attributes this numbness in part to the fact that she seemed to have become a different person

CLAREMONT: Actually, as Phoenix, she isn't. She is a more extreme example of something that was evolving before Phoenix

SANDERSON: *Well, if this is true, do you feel that if you had to do those scripts over again, would you rewrite them in any way? Do you feel that these thought processes of Scott's were made clear enough to the reader, especially considering the misinterpretation, as you see it, by certain critics?*

CLAREMONT: It depends. I could polish the words here and there. I could do that much more with old scripts than with new scripts because the writing is so much poorer, but a lot of it comes down to the interaction between myself and John. I think in that relationship, that fundamental relationship, we were always working at cross-purposes whether we realized it or not. As far as I was concerned, Phoenix was always a part of the X-Men. Jean was an integral part of the team. John disagreed, and from that disagreement—as he put it, he was getting disenchanted with the book in the mid-'20s. Then when we decided to turn Jean evil, or to make her a villain, he got intrigued and stuck around—the same way Dave had planned to quit the book with #100 until he heard that John had the inside track to replace him and then he said, "The hell with this, I'll stick around!" It's very hard to say If I could impose what I wanted on the story, if I could restructure it from beginning to end, perhaps, but I don't know—

SANDERSON: *Another reason why people have indicated disapproval of that subplot is that they see Scott falling into a relationship with Colleen real fast.*

CLAREMONT: How fast is fast? Yes, it was real fast, and that's a given of the medium, unfortunately.

SANDERSON: *And in contrast to his relationship with Lee now, he seemed not to have that many qualms about the relationship with Colleen, although it's unsure where it was heading.*

CLAREMONT: If you look at it, the way it evolved, at no point does Scott make a move Colleen is the one who takes the initiative. They talk a lot, they enjoy each other's company, but at no point does he give her any kind of sexual response or emotional response

SANDERSON: *And, indeed, he seems very surprised when Colleen gives him the key.*

CLAREMONT: Well, no one's ever done that to him before. Again, I was trying for things that got terminated for reasons that had nothing to do with the X Men. Jo [Duffy] wanted her back.

SANDERSON: *In* Power Man/Iron Fist.

CLAREMONT: Right. But again, Misty and Colleen's appearances in *The X-Men* were for reasons that had nothing to do with the X-Men. I was bounced off *Power/Fist*. Ed Hannigan didn't want either of the women in the book, and I said, "Fine, can I take them to *X Men*?," and he said "Sure." You see, I pretty much created them and I wanted to keep control of them. But Jo—quite rightly—demanded them back.

SANDERSON: *It's also true that when he hears from Hank that Jean's still alive, he immediately says, "Oh, gee, Jean's back," and rushes to call her up, and there doesn't seem to be any hesitation.*

CLAREMONT: Oh, I think if you look at that, on Scott's part there is. Actually, I think there was a line about it that was cut, where he's going, "Oh-oh, oh my God," and then rushes to the phone. Then, after that, events happen so quickly From the end of #125 to the end of "Dark Phoenix" you're talking at the most three weeks. The Proteus saga takes place in something like 50 hours, if that, and then they come back to New York and within a week you've got the Hellfire Club scenario, and then there's two weeks in New Mexico, and then they're back and from the end of #132 to #137, you're talking about *one night*. From the moment they walk into the door of the Hellfire Club at about nine o'clock that night to the beginning of #137, you're talking four hours of real time, tops.

SANDERSON: *For that matter, between Jean's supposed death in Antarctica and the time Scott first bumps into Colleen in Japan it's two months real time.*

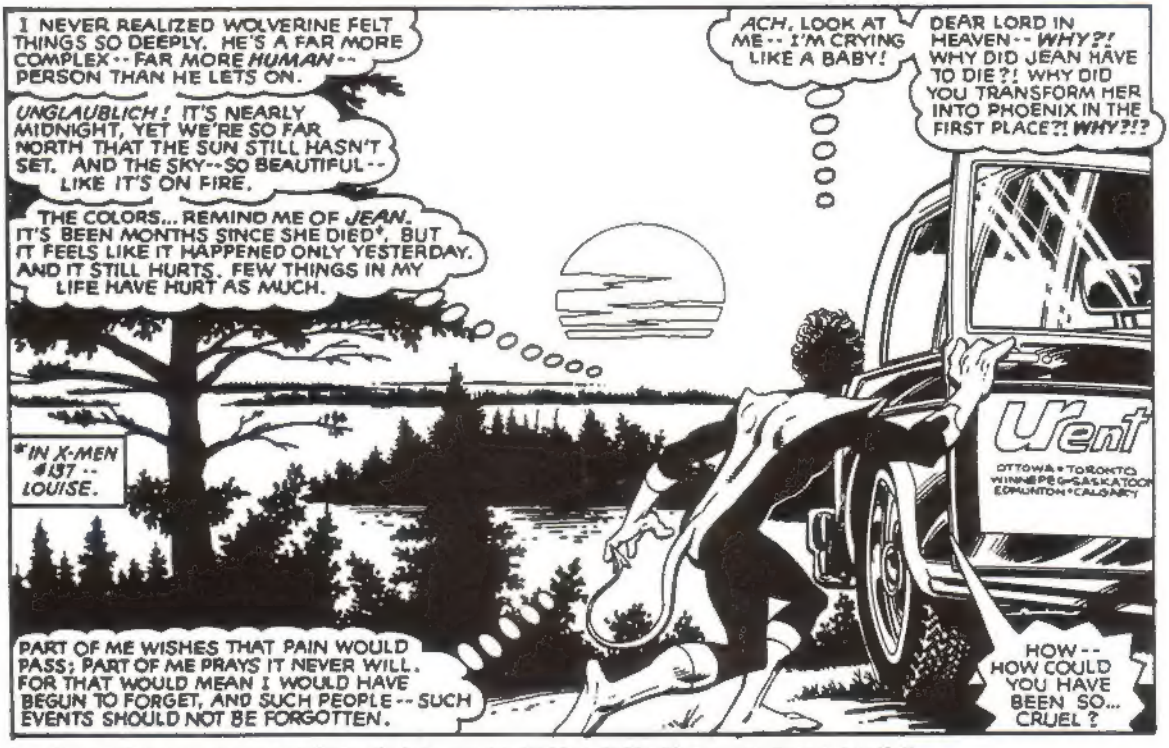
CLAREMONT: More than that, actually. Six weeks on the boat, plus about a month in the Savage Land.

SANDERSON: *That much.*

CLAREMONT: It's all understated, but time passes. I did that deliberately. Again, I had scenes blocked in where we would show the X-Men on the boat, but we ended up cutting them for space reasons and because we didn't want the story to drag out too long. It was a succession of compromises. And it's shorthand as well. You're trying to say as much as you can in as few words as you can and in as few images as possible and sometimes you can cut things too short. Don [McGregor] is one extreme; I don't know who the other is, whose work is so terse that you're never sure what's going on—the French, perhaps.

SANDERSON: *It's interesting—one fan critic complains that the X-Men don't regret Jean's death—the supposed death in Antarctica—at all. I was rereading the "Desolation" issue [#114], and virtually everybody in the cast had a scene in which he or she reacts to one of the imagined deaths—Xavier, Jean, Hank, Scott, Storm, Banshee, and Wolverine.*

CLAREMONT: A lot of people don't read per se; they read what they want. Scott is the only one who has any


I NEVER REALIZED WOLVERINE FELT THINGS SO DEEPLY. HE'S A FAR MORE COMPLEX -- FAR MORE HUMAN -- PERSON THAN HE LETS ON.
UNGLAUBLICH! IT'S NEARLY MIDNIGHT, YET WE'RE SO FAR NORTH THAT THE SUN STILL HASN'T SET. AND THE SKY -- SO BEAUTIFUL -- LIKE IT'S ON FIRE.
THE COLORS... REMIND ME OF JEAN. IT'S BEEN MONTHS SINCE SHE DIED*, BUT IT FEELS LIKE IT HAPPENED ONLY YESTERDAY. AND IT STILL HURTS. FEW THINGS IN MY LIFE HAVE HURT AS MUCH.
*IN X-MEN #137 -- LOUISE.
PART OF ME WISHES THAT PAIN WOULD PASS; PART OF ME PRAYS IT NEVER WILL. FOR THAT WOULD MEAN I WOULD HAVE BEGUN TO FORGET, AND SUCH PEOPLE -- SUCH EVENTS SHOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN.
ACH, LOOK AT ME -- I'M CRYING LIKE A BABY!
DEAR LORD IN HEAVEN -- WHY?! WHY DID JEAN HAVE TO DIE?! WHY DID YOU TRANSFORM HER INTO PHOENIX IN THE FIRST PLACE?! WHY?!?
Urent
OTTOWA • TORONTO WINNIPEG • SASKATOON EDMONTON • CALGARY
HOW -- HOW COULD YOU HAVE BEEN SO... CRUEL?

Jean's death forces a devout Catholic into doubt. [*X-Men* #139: Claremont-Byrne-Austin]]

grief lines in #138, which was my conscious decision at that point, especially when I decided to do it in the first person, because he's the most important person to respond to it. And from there on, they're still responding to it. Nightcrawler's soliloquy at the end of #139, for example, Kitty's commentary, "They all sound so sad when they speak of Jean," in #143, Scott in #144; in #145 Storm is touching the crystal and going, "Oh, Jean..." Another element that Shooter threw into this was that he did not want Xavier to feel that he had failed whereas I very specifically wanted Xavier to feel that. Shooter wanted the X-Men to win. Whereas I specifically set up that story from the very beginning to be for the first time in history, in the 20 years of Marvel Comics, a hero team has gone to the wall, has fought to the death to protect one of their own... and failed. To me the guilt for Xavier is awesome. *He* awakened Jean's telepathic ability, *he* brought her into the X-Men. If *anybody* should feel a sense of responsibility for what's happened it's him because he was off screwing with Lilandra when he could have prevented this.

SANDERSON: *He says, "Well, things happened too fast and I never debriefed Jean on what happened in that space shuttle."*

CLAREMONT: Right. He never asked. Well, he was insane after that, until #108, and then after #108, there was never a moment between #108 and the Mesmero story for him to debrief Jean properly, and the others supposedly died, and he was so caught up in his own grief, his own sense of loss, that he simply gave up. He'd had enough. First he went off with Lilandra to the Greek isles, and then he suddenly went off with Lilandra, period. He thought of himself first. Again, for the first time. But to me the characterizational possibilities were *infinite*, and still are: I intend to pick up on this sooner or later. He's a telepath, he should have realized what was happening, but again, when Phoenix was reintroduced to the X-Men, almost immediately he went off to find Sprite and then got zapped by the Hellfire Club, and from then on it was just too late.

SANDERSON: *And of course he blows it again in* #136 where Scott's almost got Jean calmed down and then he hits her from behind.

CLAREMONT: You see?

SANDERSON: *In part, I suppose, because he's still not used to communicating with people...*

CLAREMONT: Again, here John and I were working at cross-purposes. Slightly. My feeling was from the very beginning that if Scott had calmed her down, if Scott had reached out and touched her, she would have reasserted control, she would conceivably have become Phoenix again.

SANDERSON: *The one of #108?*

CLAREMONT: Green Phoenix. Not Dark Phoenix.

SANDERSON: *Or at least stood still long enough for Xavier to cure her.*

CLAREMONT: Or she would have found her center again. What I wanted to set up was Xavier overreact-

ing: "Good! She's not looking! BOOM!" He does the wrong thing. And it's *his* mistake that precipitates all these events. John felt that Xavier shouldn't do that, and so did Jim [Shooter]. I think my problem is that I have found increasingly in the last couple of years that I am less and less interested in dealing with the traditional two-dimensional archetypal heroes. I am trying to drift more and more into three-dimensionality...

SANDERSON: *Which could still be archetypal.*

CLAREMONT: Yeah, but it's three-dimensionality, which means that good guys do bad things, bad guys do good things, and the world can no longer be perceived in pure, positive/negative, black/white shades. It's grey. There is a constant moral ambiguity, out of which surface or descend points of extreme good and extreme evil. It's much harder to portray but it's much more fun—for me, anyway. And it makes many more demands on the reader, possibly more demands than they're prepared to give. A lot of letters come from people who are giving up *The X-Men* partly because they feel it's acquired a very nihilistic tone in the last few months, which I'm afraid it has, but the sales department has discovered that the book sells better when everyone dies, when the heroes almost die.

SANDERSON: *Why, you've even brought Nightcrawler, good Catholic that he is, to accusing God of being cruel [#139].*

CLAREMONT: Yes, well, that was me, not Nightcrawler, I'm afraid. I was a little indulgent. The idea is that there should be room for growth. The reason people are leaving the book is because they feel it's getting too real. They want to read the book for the fantasy elements, for the fun and games, and *The X-Men* aren't fun and games any more.

SANDERSON: *Like Cat Yronwode saying that it scares [her daughter] Althaea.*

CLAREMONT: I'm sorry. I regret that. It's gone too far in that direction, so we're going to try and pull it back a little. But for me anyway, if you want to set an analogy on what I'm trying to accomplish in *The X-Men*, it's a synthesis of the best of *M*A*S*H, Lou Grant*, and the *Hill Street Blues*. And what's happening is that the book has been sort of sliding between *Lou Grant* and *Hill Street Blues*, with *Lou Grant*'s gentle humor but occasionally a knife gets dug in. *Hill Street Blues* is very black. Things happen, and you just sort of go "*gasp*!" In the first episode, for example, the writers spend 40 minutes introducing you to these two really delightful cops—I mean, the nicest, most attractive characters on the show. They walk in a door and get blown away. They're not dead, but you *think* they're dead. They walk in on a bunch of junkies, and a guy pulls out a gun and "Bang! Bang! Bang!" The cops go down, which is just how it happens. And the other cops don't realize what's happened until the end of the show. And you're just sitting there going "Holy shit!" What's even more interesting is that the show has an extraordinary element of uncertainty. You don't know from one episode to the next if anyone's going to get killed, if the emotional relationships are going to stay the same—just like *The X-Men*! *That's* what I'm trying to do, to create that sense of reality, a sense of suspense, of involvement. *(to be continued...)*

The X-Men Companion Volume II:

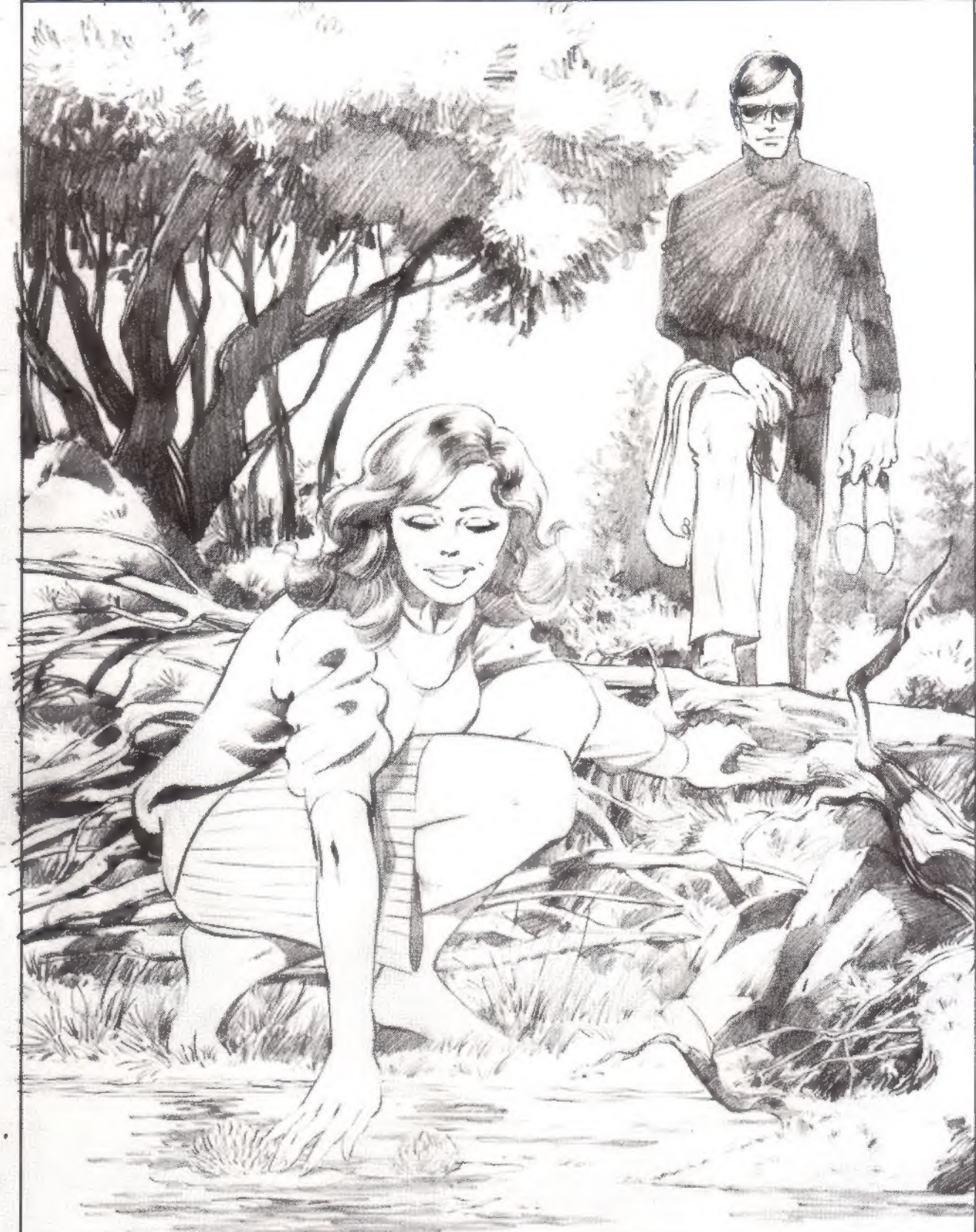
Interviews with

Chris Claremont (part two), John Byrne, and Terry Austin

with covers by Gil Kane and Fred Hembeck

PLUS:

Chris Claremont and Louise Jones on Marvel's second X-Men title.



SUGGESTED TITLE: "ALL OUR YESTERDAYS"

OFFICE! PLEASE SEND ME XEROXES OF THESE PENCILS THANX